An Indian Writer in Troubled Times

Geetanjali Shree is part of a new generation of Hindi writers that explores new directions by bringing postmodern eclecticism to themes and forms established by Hindi authors of the post-Independence generation. Although Shree has travelled widely and spent many writing hours outside of India, the main part of her work is firmly located in the subcontinent. Her novel Mai (‘Mother’, 1993) gained widespread appraisal, also because of the English translation by Nita Kumar. It is a very vivid and intimate portrait of an Indian middle-class family, composed of memories and emotional insights into the struggles and relationships of a mother with the children, and men and women in her family.

Hindi writing has a special niche in Indian culture today, developing as a record of intellectual life in postmodern India. Among the younger generation of Hindi writers, Shree has established herself with a considerable production: a dissertation on Premchand (Between two Worlds, 1983), three novels, two volumes of short stories (Anagamy/Echo, 1991; and Vairagya/Asceticism, 1999), stage-plays, and essays. In April 2003, Shree was invited by IIAS to contribute to a one-day seminar on ‘Identity’. In this article, Shree answers questions on her literary work and her other publications with wit, humour, and sincerity.

Intimacy, directness, a detailed perception of personal emotions, in a changing and uncertain contemporary social context characterize all of Geetanjali Shree’s writing. Her novel Tirohit (2003) focuses on lives and loves conducted on the roof that becomes a metaphor for an area of transgressions where a story of forbidden friendships and loves unfolds. (In traditional Indian neighbourhoods several houses are under one common roof spanning a vast area.) The novel reaches deep into the characters’ inner thoughts and emotions in a manner that is rare in Hindi fiction.

A similar emotional insight, present in the many descriptions of scenes from everyday life in Mai and Tirohit, transpires in a paper Shree presented in October 2003 at the ‘Food and Emotion’ workshop held at SOAS, London. She describes various perceptions of the presence and absence of food in her own environment and the emotional experiences it invokes: ‘A train journey. I was going to the toilet when I saw a young dishevelled bearded young beggar sloppily eating with his hand from a dhaba, the kind people use in the slums to carry water to the community toilets. A foul stench ran through my nostrils and into my whole body (no exaggeration to create an effect here) and as my eyes followed the source of the stench I noticed a nauseating assortment of food in the dhaba. The beggar took no notice of me, and kept eating with a detached concentration that I’ve wanted to have but never achieved in my life as a writer/thinker.

In many of Shree’s works, the narratives lines are more or less fragmented. In the novel Hamara Shahar as Baras (‘Our City That Year’, 1998), this technique serves to capture the effects of political violence and polarization between communities in a university town on a group of middle-class intellectuals. The novel echoes the threatening atmosphere after the demolition of a mosque in Ayodhya and reports the disruption of life and thoughts by the riots. When asked if this ‘collage’ style conveys the impression the events make on the ‘narrator’, rather than a moral judgement, Shree remarks: GS: ‘Yes, its not moral judgement the novel seeks but a more dispassionate picture of the ways the situation is impacting – no, not the narrator – but the educated middle-class characters. The ‘narrator’ is pretty much deadpan and...’
Editorial

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a postdoctoral research centre based in Leiden and Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Its main objective is to encourage the study of Asia and to promote national and international cooperation in this field. The institute focuses on the humanities and social sciences and, where relevant, at the interface between these disciplines and sciences like medicine, economy, politics, technology, law, and environmental studies.

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The IIAS acts as an international mediator bringing various parties together and works as a clearing-house for knowledge and information. This entails activities such as providing information services, constructing international networks, and setting up international cooperative projects and research programmes. In this way, the IIAS functions as a window on Europe for non-European scholars and contributes to the cultural rapprochement between Asia and Europe.

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Erratum

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In 1993, G. Aliyev, a former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, became the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan. After consolidating the branches of power, Aliyev installed his clan to administer the country. Just before his death in 2003, his son Ilham Aliyev was elected president. Azerbaijani leaders and policy makers sought a unifying national idea that would strengthen the position of the Aliyev clan throughout the country. They commissioned the nation’s intellectuals and educators to develop themes addressing ‘the united Azerbaijani nation’ and ‘the territorial integrity of the Azerbaijani lands’. Those who remained employed in public education after the dramatic budget cuts had little choice but to comply. By the beginning of the 1990s, fundamental research was hardly distinguishable from populist agitation, leaving the Azerbaijani public without tools to distinguish fact from fiction.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Azerbaijani nationalism, which never seemed radical during the time of the USSR, broke out with renewed force after independence. The lost war against Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh (1988-1994) provoked ethnic hatred and a desire for revenge. Defeat in Nagorno-Karabakh sharpened the defensive feelings of the small Azerbaijani nation, suppressed and divided in former times by its great neighbours Russia and Iran.

Suffering from low morale, the Azerbaijani people demanded new, comforting, and encouraging national concepts. Not only historians considered it their duty to write on the glories of the Azerbaijani nation. Intellectuals, publicists, scientists, and journalists from all sorts of backgrounds came together to furnish proof that Nagorno-Karabakh had belonged to the Azerbaijani people from time immemorial. The idea of ‘the great Azerbaijani state’ possessing territory in contemporary Iran, Armenia, and Georgia enjoyed great currency.

The most popular theme within numerous branches of academia became the national liberation movement in Azerbaijan at the beginning of the twentieth century. Researchers went back in time to rediscover the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict at the beginning of the twentieth century, re-interpreting the recorded thoughts and actions of Azerbaijani leaders to draw parallels to the present. The entire history of Azerbaijan came to be viewed as a long struggle for independence and recognition.

For the last thirteen years, history classes in the schools and universities of Azerbaijan have been taught from this awesomely nationalist perspective. Consequently, the younger generation has grown up determined to regain the occupied lands of Nagorno-Karabakh. So long as the key positions at the leading universities are occupied or controlled by Aliyev’s clan, and intellectuals and educators are pressured to participate in the nation-building project, trustworthy research in the social and human sciences has little chance to appear.

Between pan-Turkism and westernization

In the early 1990s Azerbaijani nationalism came under the influence of pan-Turkic ideology. Appealing to the Turkish origins of the Azerbaijani people, private Turkish charitable organizations set up a network of educational centres promoting Turkey’s interests in Central Eurasia. They successfully recruited Azerbaijani youths to schools based on the Turkish academic system, winning converts to pan-Turkic ideology. These attempts faced few obstacles from the government, which considers Turkey a close and reliable ally. Attempts to consolidate Azerbaijan’s Turkish identity did not, however, receive the unanimous support of the country’s political and intellectual elite; many preferred a more distinct national identity for Azerbaijan. By the end of the 1990s, pan-Turkism had lost much of its popularity, although Turkish-sponsored schools and universities were allowed to continue their activities.

Alongside the pro-Turkish institutes, there exist a number of pro-Western private universities that claim to be bringing Western education to Azerbaijan. The orientation of these universities corresponds to the official state ideology pertaining to democracy, civil society, and human rights. At the beginning of the 1990s, many Azerbaijani economists assumed that abandoning Soviet communism and its accompanying system of education would immediately lead them to the same level of democratic development as in the West. This, however, did not happen. Innovations introduced in the Western-oriented institutes remained superficial; despite the new administration, examination system, and Western-style diplomas and degrees, no essential changes were made to the content of education. Lecturers at these institutes were often state university professors who, due to budget cuts in public education, agreed to part-time positions in the private sector. By the end of the 1990s, Azerbaijani policy makers were making greater efforts to preserve the positive aspects of the Soviet educational system such as free access to education and resulting high literacy rates, and the high level of secondary education.

A new brand on the market

Periodically, presidential teams come out with new ideas. The concept of ‘Azerbaijanism’ was invented by G. Aliyev, and was partly based on an Azerbaijani interpretation of Americanism. According to this main idea, there is no special Azerbaijani identity in Azerbaijan that should be developed into the national paradigm. The Azeris, accounting for 70-80 per cent of the population, should observe the constitution and laws on equal terms with the other nationalities of contemporary Azerbaijan.

However positive the desire to maintain the legal structure and prevent the country from falling apart along ethnic lines may seem, the main goal of this ‘Azerbaijanism’ is to strengthen presidential power across the territory of the Republic. Pro-Turkish, pro-Western and pro-Soviet/Russian ideological streams in the education system have been tolerated by the former and current presidents of Azerbaijan – so long as they serve Aliyev’s cult. Public and private schools do not succeed without the President’s portrait in the director’s cabinet.

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1 During my field research in Baku in May 2003, I interviewed 100 Azerbaijan students, postgraduate students, and postdocs, aged 18 to 30. No less than 55 of them stated that they considered a military campaign to be the most probable solution to the Karabakh problem.

2 Practically every one of the 21 Azerbaijani doctors and professors I interviewed in Baku was unimpressed by contemporary Azerbaijani theoretical work in the social and human sciences.

3 Interview with Prof. Ramiz T. Humbatov of the Azerbaijan State Oil Academy, Baku, May 2003.

4 The central idea of Americanism can be described as the fulfillment of civil and military duties to the state and the president, respect for the US flag and anthem, and loyalty to American values such as freedom of speech, civil society, and free enterprise.

5 Interview with Prof. Parvin Gulam Darabadi, Department of International Relations of Baku State University, Baku, May 2003.
Who knows today too, people meet in
secret? Maybe there are still women, who
pack off the kids to school and husband to
office, and climb up from their house to
the roof and down from there into
another house and to its deserted back
door and out, to get a Richardson! just so.
In secret. Not from the front gate but at
the back, pressing down the boundary
wire and jumping over.
Jump over! An act full of thrill. Jump
over and the body pulsates apart, and the
moon! The moment you jump, hee hee,
tinkles of laughter escape from behind
the veil, not to be repressed, terrified but
spouting away.
That laughter Bitwa you will never
laugh. To laugh that laugh, Bitwa you
will have to be a girl. A girl who is always
laugh. To laugh that laugh Bitwa you will
never laugh.

that laughter bursts out!

From: Geetanjali Shree, Yoshit: New Delhi:
Rajkamal Prakashan (2001), p.90-91. (Trans-
lation by Geetanjali Shree)

ThdB: How do you see your work against this background;
do you feel still bound or influenced by this tradition or did
you venture out into new directions, leaving the literary past
behind?

CS: “I can only give a subjective answer: I do not feel con-
strained because of the connection with the so-called tradi-
ton of writing modern Indian fiction. First and foremost
because I am a “true” writer/artist and freedom is what I live
by! Or at least I have the illusion that I strive and reach for it.
Secondly, modern Hindi literature really came up in a big
way concomitant to the national movement and that gave it
an origin of assertion and protest. It made it a great site for
reaching out for freedom! Breaking against traditions! Cre-
ating new ones. Nothing was so sacrosanct that it must not
be questioned. On the contrary. Sure, there was all that drive
for writing to reform society but that’s not the rigid
unchangeable guideline for all writers. I would’ve even venture
to say that some of our greatest contemporaries don’t fall into
you mentioned all such simple slot.”

ThdB: Not only did you choose Hindi instead of English,
haven’t you also taken a different stylistic path than the ‘main-
stream’ Anglo-Indian authors have chosen?

CS: “I don’t see such a difference between my styles of writ-
ing and theirs from Anglo-Indian writers. Our themes may
be located in modern India or NRI [Non-Resident Indians]
West, we are basically a generation of “modern and postmod-
ern”, eclectic, sensibility and that’s our vantage point, whatev-
er our geographical location or script. This is a generation ques-
tioning the whole notion of “purism”, given its sinister political
message in current India and the world, and creates hyperdi-
y and other languages, not in the worth and
themes and styles and experimentations in other.”

ThdB: Does language, Hindi or English, matter in terms of
the distance between you and your writing?

CS: ‘For me and for many others it is a retrieval and rein-
volution in both because our colonial experience has given
the political connections to both languages. So I really feel this
distance from both English and Hindi. Yet I do suspect the
exploration is more fascinating in Hindi because of the “eas-
er” terms available to succeed in English (a point that is not
over-stressed). I am not suggesting I will succeed more
of ‘our City, That Year’ displays Shree’s concerns about the
impact of recent political developments in India on artistic
freedom and intellectual life in general. The rise of Hindu
nationalism threatens the secularist tolerance that gave post-
Independence Indian cultural and intellectual life the oppor-
tunity to flourish. In an essay called ‘Writing in Troubled
Times: reflections of an Indian writer’ Shree writes about these
devolutions:

The emergence of an ethos which is gradually gaining
power enough to direct and control events like never before.
Recent developments in India bear this out. Gujarat, the text
book controversy, the Simla Institute episode, the painting
of Saraswatii by Hussain, the stalling of Bhupen Khakkar’s
exhibition for its explicit homosexuality, and just a few days
ago an injunction that Indian girls may not wear the low-
cut, waist revealing, hipster jeans in fashion today. An ethos
more threatening because it is fast installing itself at the
centre. Among the biggest casualty in this growing rigidity and
narrowness are social relations. State-sponsored wedges are driv-
en between religious communities, as, for instance between
the Hindus and the Muslims and now the Christians too.”

In these ‘troubled times’ new Hindi writers have a special
position in Indian culture. On the one hand they connect with
a prestigious tradition in Indian writing. The rise of
Hindi was an important medium in the struggle for freedom
with a prestigious tradition in Indian writing. The rise of
Hindi was an important medium in the struggle for freedom
from colonial rule. Also, in the period after Independence, it
reflected developments in modern Indian culture. Hindi writ-
ers of today write for a small but well-educated and global-
ized audience that regards Jhumpa Lahiri and Rushdie to be just
as Indian as Frencmcad, Nirmal Varma, or Krishna Baldev
Vaid. Nevertheless, even in its postmodern guise Hindi writ-
ing seems to hold on to the specific esthetic framework that
it has developed.

ThdB: The many changes in Indian society that transpire
in your work have the effect of seriously limiting the openness
and hybridity of the cultural discourse. What do you think is the
future of the artist-cum-intellectual in India?

CS: ‘I’ll only repeat what I said about the breed of hybrid
electric writers I belong to. That’s massively related to the
changes in my immediate and larger world society. I do not
About the hybrid
By Geetanjali Shree

It’s a concept which means a lot to my kind and indeed it is the space we work in,
the space in fact which is most vibrant and full of experimentation, retrivals, and
innovation. I fear using the term only when I think of the academic definitions of it.
Because then I worry that it is linked to a Western-derived notion of identity as a bound-
ed entity as opposed to a more free-flowing, multi-cultural, pluralistic entity that our
society still knows and which I am talking about. I am not trying to blame the West; I
am only saying that concomitant to the emergence of modern nation formations, a
certain notion of the self emerged which, whether as ‘pure’ or ‘hybrid’, whatever it chat-
ter over the other, relied on the notion of a ‘closed’ identity. Perhaps it has also to
do with the Enlightenment and its stress on the rational and the scientific. The ‘East-
ern’ in me believes as much in the irrational, intuitive, ritualistic, ‘constructed’, rich-
ly make-believe world with all its open-endedness as does the artist/ writer in me which
does not fancy one bit a well-defined, neatly outlined being! So niggles about defini-
tions we can but hybridity and eclecticism both belong to and make very much my
world. With the political imperative in today’s ‘fundamentalists’ world, East and West,
adding to their worth.”
Dr Thomas de Bruijn is a specialist in early and modern Hindi and Urdu literature. He was the Guest Editor for the special theme issue on South Asian Literature in IAS Newsletter 1, and was an affiliated fellow with the IAS.

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The Internet in China: A Symposium

Introduction

China’s first email, according to legend, was sent by professor Qian Tianbai and was entitled ‘Crossing the Great Wall to join the world’. Since that first email was sent on 20 September 1987, China has been using the internet to join the world in remarkable ways, making the Great Wall not just crossable, but rather meaningless.

By Randolph Kluver

The growth of China’s internet has been astounding. With the number of internet users doubling every 18 months or so, China’s virtual presence on the development of the worldwide phenomenon is making itself felt. This can be seen in the proliferation of Chinese-language websites on servers worldwide and in the rising number of non-Chinese owned sites, including those of the American National Football League and the National Basketball Association, that now cater to Chinese surfers with Chinese-language sites. Furthermore and much to the consterna- tion of internet freedom activists, computer hardware and software companies have begun to design their products with the recommendations of the Chinese government in mind (Walton, 2003). The Chinese delegation, moreover, was successful in marginalizing the concerns of non-governmental organizations at the UN-sponsored World Summit on the Information Society in 2003.

In many ways, the Chinese government’s new influence on the development of the internet is surprising, per- haps the very opposite of what most politicians, journalists, and academics assumed would happen, namely that the internet would change China. From the inception of the online era, dra- matic proclamations left little doubt that the internet would fundamentally and irrevocably transform Chinese society, economy, and politics. It has now become clear that the impact of the internet on China, the rest of Asia, and the world, is much more nuanced than the early advocates thought.

Technological indeterminism

The worldwide growth of the internet has spawned speculation about what it will come to mean for individu- als, corporations, organizations, and governments. A prior assumptions about the technological characteristics of the internet – such as it being decentral- ized, networked, and user driven – are the basis for much of this speculate- tion, which assumes a kind of technolog- ical determinism: the conviction that certain social and political implications were inherent to the technology. Yet, contrary to the expectations of technolo- gical determinism, users around the world are interacting with, refining, and even changing the technology to suit their own purposes.

In China, Japan, South Korea, Singa- pore, and other Asian nations that have plunged headlong into the information age, we observe a reciprocal relationship behind the transformation of the inter- net and society. The internet creates new opportunities for social and individual change; but it can just as quickly become another instrument of control. Appointed by governments, corporations, and perhaps most importantly, by teenagers, the internet today fulfills functions un dreamed of a few years ago.

Given its role in transforming econo- mics and society, the internet – which in so many ways has come to define mod- ern life – demands to be studied. Along- side scientific and technological research on the internet, a new aca- demic discipline has developed in the social sciences and humanities, bridg- ing the fields of law, literature, politics, communication and media, sociology and psychology, business, and others. The internet has spawned academic con- ferences, journals, book series and fac- ulty appointments, and has added new dimensions to traditional disciplines.

This collection of articles examines just one aspect of the role of the inter- net in China: its role in forming politi- cal communities and political dis- course. It has, of course, been the hope of countless editorialists and news stories that by introducing the internet into China, the government was presenting the means for its eventual slide into oblivion. By supplying Chinese with the possibility to gain access to information, uncensored by their gov- ernment, and the opportunity to pub- lish information, to interact on signifi- cant issues, and to mobilize more effectively, the Chinese government was introducing the proverbial camel’s nose under the tent that would eventu- ally lead to the wholesale collapse of the Chinese state. A number of recent studies (and the essay by Yang Guohun in this issue) provide evidence that the Chinese population is indeed gaining a new element of empowerment in its relations with the government.

Rather than starting from the pre- mises of technological determinism, or abstract speculation about how the technology will alter China, each of these authors begins by analysing real- ies on the ground. Most importantly, how do Chinese users use the internet? Only through understanding how the internet is actually being used, adapt- ed, and integrated into the lives of its users can we begin to anticipate the changes that might occur.

Sources on the Chinese internet

There are two primary sources of information on the internet in China. The China Internet Network Informa- tion Center’s (CNNIC) semi-annual Survey Reports on the Internet in China are the most comprehensive, including among others, the number of online users, computer hosts, and domain names. While CNNIC data is the most commonly cited, private researchers often question its reliability. There are endless ways to define ‘internet user’, for example, and differing definitions and sampling methodologies yield dif- ferent results. In January 2004 the CNNIC released its thirteenth semi- annual survey. Its findings were in line with expectations: in six months, the number of users had grown by approx- imately 12 million while the number of China-hosted websites had increased by 25 per cent, to 60 million.

A second source of data on Chinese internet use is the work of Guo Liang of the Chinese Academy of Social Sci- ences. Guo, conducting research on internet use in China under the auspices of the World Internet Project, released a nuanced and in-depth report funded by the Markle Foundation in 2003 (CASS Internet Report 2003). Unlike the CNNIC study, the CASS study is based on interviews with Chi- nese net users in twelve cities, and pro- vides a richer account of how people actually use the internet, as well as their expectations of it. The report does not attempt to tally the total number of users in the country, but aims instead at a more in-depth understanding of internet users across China.

Guo’s surveys reveal that most inter- net users, as well as non-users, believe the internet is providing greater access to political information and opportuni- ties for expression. They also believe that the competitive market place for internet service providers has provided real benefits to consumers, including better access.

World opinion and journalistic cover- age of the internet in China feeds upon the stereotype of the government limiting access to the net, through both censorship and the erecting of technolo- gical barriers. There is little doubt that the government is concerned with the internet’s potential to create instability. Lokman Tsui’s essay in this volume provides a clear picture of the controls the government has implemented in its attempts to limit potential political trou- ble. At the same time, Guo’s and the CNNIC surveys reveal that the Chinese government sees the internet as an indispensable tool for economic growth and modernization, and is actively encouraging internet development on a number of fronts.

Political mobilization or marginalization?

The essays in this collection are organized around a point/countercpoint format. Yang Guohun takes the lead, demonstrating that the internet has done something quite remarkable in Chinese politics, in that it introduces an element of play, so that politics is no longer ‘in command’ but rather part and parcel of everyday discourse on the web. Yang’s essay demonstrates that the internet has become part of the public sphere, both in allowing ordinary citi- zens to participate in political discus- sion, and in helping to redefine the nature of Chinese society, especially in citizens’ relations to the state.

The subsequent essays are all written in response and while agreeing with Yang’s central contention, qualify the potential of the net to be all that many hoped it would be. Lokman Tsui’s essay focuses on the issue of state control, demonstrating that the Chinese government has adopted a sophisticated approach that effectively precludes the ability of the internet to provide a space for active mobilization in opposition to the Communist Party of China.

Ian Weber and Lu Jia examine the commodification of the internet in China, where corporations that control most of the content have no commercial incentive to provide platforms to criti- cize government policies. Weber and Lu argue that the Chinese government has, in significant ways, handed control of the internet to these corporations, and that international media conglomerates play a significant role in defining what the Chinese internet is becoming.

Finally, Jens Damnn examines the internet’s role within the larger social changes transforming China, where choice and liberty in a consumerist, postmodern society have contributed to social fragmentation rather than the enhanced public sphere envisioned by the internet’s early enthusiasts. Damnn also refocuses our attention on the internet’s technological characteristics and finds that, in contrast to early expectations of decentralized technolo- gy leading to a decentralized nation, the ‘code’ of the internet is being rewritten in China in ways to maintain social and political stability, and economic growth.

It has become abundantly clear: the internet will impact on Chinese socie- ty and China will transform the inter- net. The Great Wall has become mean- ingless as a barrier to prevent foreign intrusion: the political, economic, and social forces that these essays bring to light may well shape the future both of China and the internet.

References


By Randolph Kluver

Singapore Internet Research Centre

Dr Randolph Kluver is the Executive Director of the Singapore Internet Research Centre and an associate professor in the School of Com- munication and Information at Nanyang Technological University. He is the co-editor of Asia.com: Asia Encounters the Internet (2003) and co-founder and moderator of the Chinese Internet Research Listserve.

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China Internet Research Listserve

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/chineseinternetresearch
The internet is a virtual public sphere, but not the kind envisioned by Habermas. He considered the coffee shop and the English pub of eighteenth-century Europe as its exemplars, where equals meet to reason on issues of common concern, and ultimately, produce public opinion. It seems doubtful, though, that people patronized coffee shops mainly to reason with their peers. Rather, serious topics, coffee shops, pubs and today, the internet, are venues for socializing, joking, bantering, having a good time. The fun part lures people back, while politics gets its fair share of attention along the way. In other words, one reason why the internet seems to be producing some very interesting politics in China is that it is a fun place to go. If it is a public sphere, it is one that melds politics with play.

**Politics in the virtual sphere**

The first is the SUNZhigan case. A college graduate, Sun died of a police beating on 20 March 2003 while in custody in Guangzhou. Lacking a temporary resident permit, Sun had been taken into custody three days earlier. News of his death, however, did not become public until 25 April, in a local newspaper. As soon as the accident, the more likely it is to arouse the virtual crowd, always lurking and always alert. Once aroused, the networked crowd can rapidly fill the web with queries, information exchanges, debate, protest, and organized activity, at times even achieving the power of public opinion. An issue of general interest, such as the one in 1989, excepted, has rarely been such a constant stream of public talk in China as is found in the virtual realm. Let me mention only three of the more politicized cases.

**Politics in the virtual sphere**

The second case concerns the February 2003 death of a young teacher named HUANG Jing, found dead in her school dorm in Xianhang, Hunan province. Despite evidence to the contrary, public authorities initially ruled out murder. To push for further police investigation, Huang’s mother published descriptions of her death on the internet. Two months later, a young man who had met Huang in a chat room set up a virtual memorial for her on www.netze.com. The virtual memorial gripped the public. Within five months, there were more than 20,000 visits to the memorial. An online petition was launched to request the Ministry of Public Security to investigate the case. A feminist scholar published an essay on a bulletin board arguing that Huang’s death was a typical case of date rape. Since ‘date rape’ is a new topic in China, the essay was an instant hit. Under public pressure, police investigations and medical examinations were performed. While the case remains unresolved, online debates and petitions transformed it into an issue much greater than the initial catalyst. Again, a personal horror story gripped a wide audience, leading to the formation of a virtual community that pressured a government body into action.

The final example demonstrates that beyond providing space for debate, online publics can also be a powerful forum for organizing offline activist campaigns. One such group is Han Hai Sha (lit. ‘Ocean of Sand’), which focuses on desertification issues. Its website www.desert.org.cn was launched in June 2002 complete with an electronic newsletter, a bulletin board, archives of documents on desertification issues, and current events. During the SARS crisis, its volunteers did a great deal of work. On 5 May 2003, they produced a special issue of their electronic newsletter on SARS. Over the next month, they published 25 special issues on SARS, with essays by volunteers and other sources providing information, analyzing its causes, and offering strategies and solutions. An essay published in March 2003 on www.qiangguoluntan.cn was entitled ‘The Shortcomings of the System in the Shadow of SARS.’ The outbreak, the essay argued, exposed the shortcomings of China’s political system; it proposed institutional changes to increase government transparency, public trust, and better information delivery to the public. In contrast to the two earlier examples, where a story of personal loss gained a wide net audience and broadened into criticisms of the state, this web action was initiated by a community site that was organized around a specific issue to start with. How did a community site come to voice such open criticism? Might criticism and debate spread to more mainstream venues?

The virtual public sphere is both segmented and linked, a reflection of the basic contradiction of our times. Bulletin boards and community forums are fun places. One such group is Han Hai Sha (lit. ‘Ocean of Sand’), which focuses on desertification issues. Its website was launched in June 2002 complete with an electronic newsletter, a bulletin board, archives of documents on desertification issues, and current events. During the SARS crisis, its volunteers did a great deal of work. On 5 May 2003, they produced a special issue of their electronic newsletter on SARS. Over the next month, they published 25 special issues on SARS, with essays by volunteers and other sources providing information, analyzing its causes, and offering strategies and solutions. An essay published in March 2003 on www.qiangguoluntan.cn was entitled ‘The Shortcomings of the System in the Shadow of SARS.’ The outbreak, the essay argued, exposed the shortcomings of China’s political system; it proposed institutional changes to increase government transparency, public trust, and better information delivery to the public. In contrast to the two earlier examples, where a story of personal loss gained a wide net audience and broadened into criticisms of the state, this web action was initiated by a community site that was organized around a specific issue to start with. How did a community site come to voice such open criticism? Might criticism and debate spread to more mainstream venues?

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The Taste of Information

State Attempts to Control the Internet

By Lokman TSUI

A t the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva last December, participants expressed a com-
mon desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclu-
sive, and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize, and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peo-
ples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sus-
tainable development and improving their quality of life. According to this declaration, freedom of speech, informa-
tion and communication are the means to a better quality of life. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), however, has fol-
lowed its strict line in curbing these freedoms. Many believed a new situation would arise with the growth of commercial media, but as Chuan-Chuan Lee (2003, p.12) argues: ‘under no circumstances will the Party-State relinquish its editorial authority.’ The internet, with its open and decentralized struc-
ture, poses new challenges to the Party-State’s editorial authority yet again.

Over its decade-long relationship with the internet, China has made various attempts to gain political control over the medium. The first attempt was to regulate the internet focused on the development of a nationwide intranet. Con-
trol of the web was to be based on inclusion rather than exclusion, on regulating what people could see, instead of what they could not see. Thus the national intranet offered only those parts of the internet deemed desirable, a strate-
gy opposite to offering the whole internet minus its cen-
sored sites. These intranets, however, never caught the pub-
lic’s interest, failed to draw a profit and died quietly. The government shifted its focus towards a policy of control based on exclusion.

The infrastructure of the Chinese internet consists of sev-
eral key providers that carry the mass of traffic inside the country. Traffic to sites hosted outside China must pass through an international gateway maintained by China Tele-
com. This international gateway makes it possible to screen websites based on a blacklist. Websites served as a warning to others, leading to self-regulation. The closure of such a high profile BBS served as a warning to others, leading to self-regulation among other BBS. Self-regulation is also prevalent among companies: over three hundred signed a voluntary pledge of adherence to the regulations. Likewise, the detection of cyber dissidents has intimidated individual users into exer-
cising self-censorship. (Tsui 2003: 70-71). This discussion reminds us that China’s attempts to control the flow of information are extensive and ongoing. While most websites are accessible despite the blacklist, internet use rarely crosses Chinese borders. According to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences survey report (2003, p.53), Chinese users access websites located in China almost 80 per cent of the time. This does not include Chinese lan-
guage websites from Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore, which together make up another 13 per cent. Western websites
are thus accessed, at most, only 7 per cent of the time. This is a sobering figure in contrast to the sky-high expecta-
tions of many Western analysts. The flow of information is restricted not only by top down controls but also by bottom up factors, such as language barriers, disinterest in alterna-
tive media and diverse levels of self-regulation. (Mulvenor & Chase 2002: 45).

Food for thought

The attempts of the Party-State to control the internet have been far from successful. How much of its suc-
cess, however, is due to bottom-up social factors rather than to top-down political control? Three issues come to mind. First, instead of focusing on attempts to control websites that barely appear on the radar of the average Chinese netizen, we might focus on the things that really interest the average user. What makes people spend 80 per cent of their time on Chinese websites? Second, instead of focusing on the country’s main search engine. Sina, one of the major portals in China, has already adopted Chinasearch, whose search results filter out links considered subversive or pornographic. Only approved news items can be published on news web-
sites; the main online content providers thus avoid political


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ty Center for Law in the Information Society. His research topics character-
ize the social changes which have taken place within the last decade in China.

Chat room (liaotianshi): a virtual space where users may
communicate in real-time. As a result of the fragmentation of the interest groups, the possible anonymity of chat rooms and the lack of incentives for longer commitment, the discussions in many chat rooms tend to be superficial.

Netizen (weimeng): this term, which has been attributed to Howard Rheingold, refers to the ‘citizen of the internet’. It is important to realize that in a narrow sense ‘netizens’ do not include users who come to the net for proflane rea-
sions such as making profits or who regard the internet as merely a service provided by others. An important feature of the netizen is his/her active engagement in creating a public sphere on the Net.

Weblogs (sometimes shortened to ‘blog’): a website of personal or non-commercial origin that uses a dated log format and that is frequently updated with new informa-
tion about a particular subject or range of subjects. The information can be written by the site owner, gleaned from other websites or other sources, or contributed by users. A weblog may consist of the recorded ideas of an individ-
ual (a sort of diary) or a complex collaboration open to anyone. Most of the latter are moderated discussions. The rapid increase of the number of weblogs in China, spurred its government to block the most popular host for these weblogs:
Handing over China’s Internet to the Corporations

China’s internet development, as the world’s fastest growing online population and quickly maturingcyberspace, is built around two guiding principles: political control and economic progress. This situation reflects the underlying dilemma of the government. While the government desperately wants to control the flow of news and opinion, especially dissent, it also wants an open, modern, and efficient economy, including a state-of-the-art telecommunications and information infrastructure (China sites pledge, 2002). As such, authorities have implemented a range of strategies to guide China’s media modernization, diversification, and corporatization. Although China’s moves towards overt control, such as selective censorship of the news and increased monitoring of internet chat rooms, are well documented (editors note: see Tsui essay on the previous page), less well known are the solutions that are less draconian, but more effective. One key example of this is the promotion of self-regulation within the commercial sector using the 2003 “Public Pledge on Self-discipline for China’s Internet Industry” as a mechanism for standardization and self-censorship.

Research

Chinese teenage internet users make the most of their school lunch hour by spending time playing their favourite online games at an internet bar (qweqwe) in Shanghai, China.

Certainly the Hollywood adage that ‘build it and they will come’ holds true in China’s internet development. As reported elsewhere in this newsletter, recent internet research figures indicate there are now almost 8 million netizens online, an increase of 11.5 million compared to the first half of 2003 (CNNIC, 2003). China’s internet population is second in the world to that of the United States. In addition, the report indicates that 10.9 million computers were connected to the internet (+20.2 per cent), with almost 62 million websites (+47.5 per cent) (Chinese Internet surfers, 2004). Who are these internet consumers and what are they consuming? Official government research by CNNIC indicates that the internet user demographic is changing with technology and consumer expertise and consumer reach with its experience as a global media company Disney Corporation announced it had formed a partnership with Sohu.com, a leading Chinese company offering media online, communications, commerce, and mobile value-added services. The joint venture reflects recent moves by global media players to link with local and mobile value-added services. The joint venture reflects recent moves by global media players to link with local and mobile value-added services. The joint venture reflects recent moves by global media players to link with local


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By Ian Weber & Lu Jia

Not all fun and games

Will the Chinese government be able to reconcile the standardization of the internet under the auspices of controlled commodification with the promotion of national development (guoji jianshe) and nation building (guoji jiangban)? According to Wong (2001), controlled commodification is best understood within the political economy perspective, which requires a deeper understanding of the evolving government-media relationship within the material context of global capitalism. Given China’s balancing act between opening up through the WTO agreement and its political sensitivities, the process of thinking globally and acting locally is vital to understanding the country’s fundamental contradiction in relation to its information management strategy. On the one hand, government uses the media to assist in nation building, or the bringing together of peoples by adopting common values and practices under the banner of national identity, and national development, in the form of socio-economic development or Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. On the other, the government actively seeks to control and corporatize, control and commodify the media, which functions to sell audiences (consumers) to advertisers. As such, media organizations like Disney Corporation produce cultural commodities (content) – movies, games and mobile phone content – that is calculated to ensure maximum returns to capital. Simply put, these cultural commodities are for entertainment: to amuse, divert, and distract the online masses from the alienation or marginalization from the fast-paced change surrounding and enveloping their daily lives (Wong, 2003). Such cultural commodities are stamped with the ‘sameness’ for interchangeability across media platforms, which increases profitability within a vertically integrated business structure, and complies with the aims of the Pledge.

Within this platform of commodification, the four Cs – control, consumerism, content, and corporatization – play out in ways to benefit the government’s vision of national and socio-economic development, which promotes consumption of ‘approved’ commodities. But while the Pledge establishes standards of content, it does not adequately identify standards for content, despite claims by media corporations to the contrary. At this stage of controlled commodification, with the internet becoming a cyber arcade of entertainment instead of an important forum of free speech and a source of information and the long-term consequences to the value system of young Chinese in relation to national identity and the rise of civic society.

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Illustration: "Internet in China: A strategic view of intercultural communication in Chinese organizational settings. PG02804690@ntu.edu.sg"
Taking an optimistic view of the ‘unlimited potential’ of the role of the internet with regard to political changes, many political analysts, journalists, and politicians in the Western world assume that the internet offers the possibility of sophisticated political discourse aimed at overthrowing the political system in authoritarian states, and that this process can only be slowed down by political control and harsh censorship (Chase/Mulvenon 2002:xxi). This view is, however, based on a very narrow concept of the structure of the internet, which survives from an early period in which internet use was restricted to an academic elite.

One person starts surfing the net and the whole family gets healthier. This Chinese approach towards the internet was found in a billboard advertisement campaign in Beijing by the pharmaceutical company, Sanjyu.

Ten years ago, Howard Rheingold (1993) described the internet as the perfect tool for a young and free netizen community. Focusing on the critical user able to publish at will and at negligible cost, he saw cyberspace as a home for ‘virtual communities’. In this home, new, existing or chat rooms and BBS-newsgroups to form new and lasting relationships, thus defining the physical borders of the real world. The World-Wide Web, email-lists, and newsgroups were seen as a space where, despite various control and censorship measures taken by governments, vast amounts of background information were offered with the aim of creating well-informed critical netizens. Lessig (1995:44) expressed this vision as follows: ‘The space promised a kind of society that real space could never allow — freedom without anarchy, control without government, consensus without power. … The claim was now that government could not regulate cyberspace, that cyberspace was essentially and unavoidably free.’ This utopian vision does not account for two significant issues: first, the process which transformed the internet into a profit-oriented business media, and second, the massive expansion of the internet worldwide, which made it much less a ‘toy’ for the highly educated academic US West Coast elite, and an everyday media such as radio and TV. This very process also led to the trivialization and de-idealization, and thus depoliticization, of the internet. Another important point concerns the technical and administrative structure of the Net, which has been described by Lessig (1995:6) as ‘code’. The code of the internet is comparable with the law in society: the internet, the software, and the rules are created by various groups such as state organs, individuals, and companies. The code represents the combination and interaction of the software, hardware, and rules and etiquette of the internet. The structure of the code derives, therefore, from the power struggles between different groups. To quote Lessig (1995:6) ‘We can build, or architect, or code cyberspace to protect values that we believe are fundamental, or we can build, or architect, or code cyberspace to allow those values to be trampled.” Code is never found; it is only ever made, and only ever made by us’.

A more detailed analysis of some basic features of the internet in China reveals that the internet in China is not an ideal tool for establishing political discourses and political change, as certain features of the code underlying the internet, can predetermine meaningful discourse. It is not so much the increasing polit-

The code of the Net

There is a second reason to believe that the internet is unlikely to bring about rapid political change: the current use of the internet in China is congruent with the broad societal, political, and cultural transformations that have shaped China in the last decade. The Chinese middle class, which makes up the most important group of internet users, is part of a postmodern society, with a strong interest in personalized communication and individualized lifestyles. This group is now much less politicized than it was in the 1980s, when the reforms had just taken off. The current Chinese internet fits the picture of the apolitical society that WANG JING [1996:2-a] portrayed for the Chinese internet [now] for mainland Chinese citizens to conclude which historical course would better empower the masses politically, culturally, and economically.

Chinese citizens could not choose between an elitist cultural agenda and an economic one, which would include ‘the perpetuation of Chinese socialism (no matter how ideologically corrupt it turns out to be) as a challenge and alternative to Western liberalism’. The second way, which was not chosen by the Chinese but forced on them from above, was ‘the commercialization and depoliticization of the Net, since even today the political discourses in China are largely restricted to intellectual circles. *

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Dr Jens Damm is a research associate at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Free University Berlin. His research interests include new communication technologies, identity politics, and gender studies in China to spread transformative information, but they seldom deal with the question of whether Chinese users consider this information to be trustworthy, and whether the personal interests at stake with the fact that in a postmodern, consumer-oriented society such as China, highly sophisticated chat rooms and web pages (multimedia) are in vogue (see, for example, Chase/Mulvenon 2002). The user’s attention is drawn to the latest fashion, the latest vogue in brand names, and the latest group. With the onslaught of commercialization, the web increasingly resembles a virtual version of Tokyo’s Ginza district, and a brief survey of the topics on offer within the best-known Chinese chat rooms provided by Sohu or Netease shows that the user is attracted not by politics, but by the personal interests of groups which have resulted from today’s fragmented lifestyles. *

The internet may have an important role to play in the spread of actual information, but in times of crisis the general usage patterns may change. For the time being, however, the internet has only a limited influence on emerging political discourses in China and has much more importance as a tool for lifestyle communications with a very personalized use. In addition, there is an increased use of the internet by the general population, which is also leading to the depoliticization of the Net, since even today the political discourses in China are largely restricted to intellectual circles.

* Ginza, Tokyo’s most famous shopping district, has become a synonym for a highly commercialized culture.
Everything is not Lost
The Digital Archive for Chinese Studies (DACHS)

By Jennifer Gross & Hanne E. Lecher

A rticulations reflecting the Chinese social and political discourse appear in all languages and, as the concept of national borders is alien to the internet, from all over the world, including China proper, Hong Kong and Macau, and Taiwan. The Digital Archive for Chinese Studies (DACHS) defines ‘Chinese internet’ in a very broad sense, to include material from overseas Chinese communities, Chinese foreign students and from scholars, institutions, and mass media covering the Chinese speaking region. It is the aim to cover a broad range of resources on varied topics, such as the reflection of the SARS epidemic on the internet, speeches from high-ranked Chinese politicians, historical documents from American or Russian archives, non-institutional web-sites created in China or elsewhere, and clippings from Chinese discussion boards.

A human approach

Strategies of selection are crucial for the success of the project. After detecting outbursts of heated internet debates as much as possible, our next step will be to rely on our ‘information network’, that is the judgement and knowledge of frequent internet users from all academic fields, various professions, and every nationality, who are (actively or passively) part of the discourse concerned. This human approach harbours many deficiencies, to be sure. Not only does the selection, downloading, and metadata creation process require a considerable amount of labour, identifying relevant resources in this fashion also involves a significant portion of chance, and in the end only a tiny fraction of the available resources can be covered.

Having said that, this approach will enable us to respond to current threads of discussion, to consciously select a broad range of different opinions on various current affairs, and to make full use of the background knowledge our informants provide, due to the fact that we will integrate the latter as commentary into the metadata for the resources. In addition to gathering resources in this fashion, we also aim to considerably extend our archive by integrating complete collections donated or sold to the Institute by private individuals, researchers, research groups, institutes, and other organizations.

As there is quite some variation in our focal material, we have developed three different approaches for getting hold of relevant resources. First of all we try to single out certain broad, long-term developments such as China’s relationship with the WTO and the like. On these topics, we are actively searching and collecting a wide range of relevant material, making use of internet search engines, newsgroups, and mailing lists.

A second important focus are historical events that cause heated discussions on the internet, for which the debates concerning the 11 September terrorist attack are an obvious example. To capture as much of such outbreaks of public discussion as possible, we are setting up a list of relevant discussion boards, newspapers, and websites. The main ideas are: checking the websites whenever an important event occurs, so as to compile a set of snapshots, covering a time-span of a few weeks before and after the event. Third, certain fragments of public discussion may neither pertain to event related discussions, nor to one of our special collection topics yet be considered important enough for current or later research. Essentially, the concept of collecting this miscellaneous material is basically the same.

A shared technical effort

In order to provide the best possible access to the material it is necessary to create metadata. This process, among the most crucial and most time consuming part of our workflow. For one these metadata offer an important means for access as they provide standardized information on author, title, subject, and so forth. Moreover, in view of the long-term preservation of digital resource metadata are highly significant in that they can carry all sorts of information on content as well as on technical and administrative data necessary for proper identification and future handling. At present, the library catalogue of the Institute of Chinese Studies in Heidelberg has been re-designed so as to accommodate the necessary metadata, including categories for rights management, history of origin, management history, file types, identifiers, and others.

The DACHS has been developed largely according to the Open Archival Information System (OAI) framework, an ISO standard for long-term preservation of digital data. In the DACHS issues such as daily backup routines in three places in southern Germany, failure-proof IT systems, and virus checks based on hourly updated virus definitions are cared for in the best way possible.

Obviously, a comparatively small institute such as ours cannot satisfactorily cover the field on its own; hence preparations for international cooperation are now in progress. While it is necessary to distribute the effort, it is essential that the integrity of the whole is preserved. Together with the Institute of Chinese Studies at Leiden University, where currently large digital collections on the SARS epidemic, contemporary poetry, and the homosexual scene in China are being built up, DACHS is currently running the first testing phase for transnational cooperation. In close cooperation with the Leiden University Library possibilities of large digital resource management systems are also explored and will most probably be used for the whole project. 

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After Mongolia’s peaceful transition from a centrally planned to a market oriented economy in the early 1990’s, ICT was the second development to bring Mongolia out of its isolation. Information and computing technology is on the rise in Mongolia because it is the fast track to the outside world, socially as well as economically (206 out of 10,000 went online in 2002 against 126 in 2000).1 Through ICT, or more precisely through access to the internet, the availability of the Mongolian font and mobile telecommunications, a host of new opportunities for social and economic development has been created.

Rural Mongolia online?

Dalanzagid is a small provincial capital of five thousand people in the vast, empty Gobi. The town provides services to nomadic herdsmen, and enjoys some seasonal tourism. A survey in Dalanzagid revealed that its residents use the internet to communicate and to access information on local news, health, markets, and the weather. The ability to write and send emails in one’s own language to relatives and friends in Ulaanbaatar has had an incredible impact on Mongolian rural communities. To be able to consult a doctor in the capital via email saves time and money. To be able to access information on agriculture, or to get information on how to send money home to the family, or to purchase and sell goods via the internet, improves the horizons of Mongolian society.

ICT and governance

The government recognizes the opportunity ICT represents, and sees itself as the patron of its development. The government’s capacity to promote ICT in the country is, however, limited. This is mainly due to the lack of human and financial resources, and, perhaps, the remnants of Mongolia’s political history. With a tendency to centralize rather than decentralize, to regulate rather than facilitate, and with a mild distrust of the private sector, the government is reluctant to accept policy advice from stakeholders, particularly those in the private sector. The government, however, recognizes the value of ICT for Mongolia to overcome its isolation; with economic growth in mind, it has not hampered access to ICT or the internet.

In the year 2000, the Mongolia parliament ratified Vision 2010, a policy statement developed together with the private sector, civil society, academia, and the donor community. To implement Vision 2010, a national ICT committee was established, chaired by the prime minister and including representatives from national and international NGOs, academia, and the private sector. In January 2002 the government and the World Bank jointly organized an international donor meeting to mobilize resources for ICT. Recognizing its economic potential, the government established a ‘National ICT Park’, a technologically intelligent building providing housing and services to small IT companies. As Mongolia’s economy is small, even a modest (export) sector will have considerable economic and social impact. Last but not least, the government hopes that a viable IT sector will provide jobs for young graduates.

In spite of Vision 2010, progress is slow. This is in part due to the changing of the guard in 2000: Vision 2010 was developed by the previous government, and many of its civil servants departed with their expertise. Furthermore, stakeholders played a large part in drafting the document, but have been less involved in its implementation. So far Vision 2010 has led to the creation of a policy framework for the ICT industry, and changes in education to include ICT awareness training and professional IT courses. National priorities, however, are set within financial and human resource constraints; much of what the government can do is determined by the donor community which does not see ICT as a priority. Last but not least, the government has a tendency to focus on the T in ICT and gives priority to infrastructure. There is a belief that once the infrastructure is there, the rest will follow. As a result, ICT tends to get lost among the issues that clamour for attention. Nonetheless, ICT and the internet have broadened the horizons of Mongolian society.

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2. To implement practical ICT awareness courses, the Asian Development Bank, South Korea, and other donors have provided many rural secondary schools with computer labs, connected to the internet via VSAT (Very Small Aperture Terminal). Some of these schools have opened their classrooms to citizens. By paying a small sum, rural Mongolians learnt how to use computers and access the internet.
3. Vision 2010 aims to advance social development and improve Mongolians’ quality of life by fostering the country’s intellectual potential. Its platform includes: government involvement in the provision of ICT; the creation of a business environment integrated into the world economy; increased intellectual content and competitiveness for national products; the creation of a favourable environment for Mongolian citizens to communicate freely among themselves and with the world community regardless of location; and the promotion of equal involvement and participation in social relationships.

By Margreet van Doodewaard

Mongolia: who bridges the digital divide?

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

Notes

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A New Approach to the Study of Islamic Activism

By Quintan Wiktorowicz

For decades, the study of Islamic activism has languished at the margins of social science theory. Excepting a handful of scholars, particularly those who focused on the Iranian revolution, research on Islamic activism has been conceptualized by tactical and strategic assessments of costs and risks. Strategies reflect conscious evaluation of whether decisions help to achieve goals within a context of opportunities and constraints. While the approach tends to avoid the conceptual language of rational choice theory (preferences, utility maximization, etc.), it shares the emphasis on strategic decision-making.

This trend is most apparent in studies of violent groups. Perhaps as a reaction to caricatures of the ‘irrational zealot’, social scientists have highlighted the strategic logic of radicals. Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela (2000), for example, argue that Hamas strategically responds to changes in political context. Prior to the al-Aqsa intifada in 2000, the growing popularity of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process challenged the viability of Hamas. Strict intransigence towards peace eroded support from a population that sought an end to the economic and social hardships of occupation. In response, Hamas tactically adjusted its doctrine to accommodate the possibility of peace, framing it as a temporary pause in the jihad (this calculus, of course, changed with the al-Aqsa intifada). A rational actor model has also been used to examine an array of other radical groups, including the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria and al-Qaeda.

This is not to completely marginalize the role of Islamist ideology in decision-making. The universe of potential arguments is circumscribed by the ‘imaginable options’ within particular world views. But the rationality of Islamist decision-making demonstrates that the process of choice is shared by many types of movements.

Framing

Although the new approach to Islamic activism de-emphasizes ideology and belief as causal variables, it does not reject the role of ideas altogether. Instead, the focus is on how ideas are socially created, arranged, and disseminated. In other words, the emphasis is on the process of constructing discourse, and the resulting ideational packages. In the parlance of social movement theory, movements must ‘frame’ their arguments to persuade audiences and elicit support and participation.

Al-Qaeda, for example, is enshrined in a bitter ‘frame dispute’ with the Saudi Ulama (religious scholars), where each ascertains a particular interpretation and the right to sacred authority (Wiktowicz 2004). Al-Qaeda emphasizes the knowledge, character, and logic of its scholars while attacking its detractors using the same criteria. Al-Qaeda supporters are framed as honoured, independent, and scientific in their approach to interpreting Islam. Opponents, in contrast, are framed as ‘sheikhs of authority’ or ‘palace lackeys’ inextricably linked to corrupt Muslim governments. The framing strategy is set in place by early conceptual language about the Islamic activist. Rather than viewing activists as guided by dogmatic adherence to ideology, a number of recent studies adopt a more realistic actor model. From this perspective, Islamic activists are driven by tactical and strategic assessments of costs and risks. Ideas reflect conscious evaluation of whether decisions help to achieve goals within a context of opportunities and constraints. While the approach tends to avoid the conceptual language of rational choice theory. Preferences, utility maximization, etc., it shares the emphasis on strategic decision-making.

While the illustrations outlined above are derived from work on movements in the Middle East, they empower audiences. Appeals to nationalism, tribalism, and even human rights find themselves intertwined with religious and ideological packages. The eclectic nature of such frames demonstrates the strategic dimension of framing: content is frequently selected according to its potential persuasiveness rather than solely on the basis of ideology.

An approach to the study of Islamic activism that draws from social science theory offers substantial insights about Islamic exceptionalism. Drawing from a large empirical base of comparative research, it offers analytic tools for addressing key questions. And by emphasizing the dynamics of activism rather than the uniqueness of Islam as an organizing belief system, the approach opens possibilities for dialogue with students of non-Islamic contention, potentially bringing new insights.

Islamic activists are driven by tactical and strategic assessments of costs and risks

In some instances, Islamists construct frames that meld religious and non-religious mobilizations. The analysis here is based on interviews with prominent Islamic activists. The interviews address key questions. And by emphasizing the dynamics of Islamic activism rather than the uniqueness of Islam as an organizing belief system, the approach opens possibilities for dialogue with students of non-Islamic contention, potentially bringing new insights.
The Introduction of Biomedicine into the Indo-Tibetan Himalayas

By Alex McKay

Designed to fill this lacuna in our field, my current research is guided by the proposition that there were four main agents behind the spread of biomedicine in the Himalayan region: medical missionaries, private travellers, commercial representatives, and the colonial state – the British Imperial Government of India. Records of missionaries, travellers, and the colonial state are both abundant and revealing. Commercial records are, however, less easy to access, with pharmaceutical companies reluctant to open their archives to potential critics. Therefore, I would be pleased to hear from anyone with knowledge of the activities of Indian and other companies with commercial interests in the spread of biomedicine.

In the early years of the British presence in South Asia, European and indigenous medical systems were not necessarily incompatible. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, European medicine underwent something of a revolution: developments such as germ theory, the discovery of anaesthetics and systematic vaccination led to a radical departure from earlier understandings. This transformation was accompanied by an increasing sense of superiority among practitioners of biomedicine, with the consequent loss of interest in indigenous systems and remedies for disease.

The transmission of biomedicine to the peoples of the Himalayas began in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Missionaries began to place increasing emphasis on the use of medicine as a means to encourage conversion, colonial travellers and officials, in their efforts to discover and map the remotest corners of the region, introduced, incidentally, knowledge of at least the basic features of the Western biomedical system. There were political imperatives: the need to attract indigenous supporters to the imperial system. On top of this, belief in the ‘White Man’s Burden’ and his ‘Christian duty’ coalesced with the belief that scientific principles were universally applicable, and knowledge could – to both political and moral benefit – be transferred from the metropolises to the farthest reaches of the empire, and indeed the world.

There was an almost total absence of state public health structures in the Himalayan region at the beginning of the twentieth century. Indigenous medicine consisted of several strands of belief and practice, with elite traditional, shamanic, ‘village-level’ and household practitioners providing medical treatment, generally within a religious teleological framework. Medicine, however, lacked state and professional organization and a system of verification. While not without efficacy, particularly for conditions that included psychological aspects, the Himalayan world was largely defenceless against epidemics, child mortality was high, and certain serious conditions were virtually endemic.

Biomedicine in its early twentieth-century form offered a variety of treatments that were to radically alter the Himalayan medical landscape, not the least of which was surgery (particularly for cataracts) and vaccination against smallpox. As was the case elsewhere, the new medical system did not meet with immediate acceptance. Nor did it, while eventually becoming hegemonic at state and local elite levels, entirely displace indigenous systems of medical practice. Elements of biomedicine were adopted at various speeds: some were adapted for use within local systems, while others were resisted. The subject demands, therefore, consideration of the process of adoption and interaction with indigenous systems and practices.

Within its general survey of the process by which biomedicine came to predominate in the Indo-Tibetan Himalayas, this project focuses on five particular regions: Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, Darjeeling district, and Chamba district in the western Himalayas. Each of these regions existed in a slightly different constitutional relationship to the Government of India, and by analysing them separately, the effects of the different relationships with the Indian state on the development of medical systems can be discerned.

Imperial stepping stones
In Chamba district, for example, missionaries were the prime agents in introducing biomedicine and in establishing its predominance. Christian missionaries were forbidden to enter Tibet, where the Imperial government’s Indian Medical Service officers were the primary agents in spreading biomedical practices. In both cases, the project succeeded by obtaining the consent and support of indigenous elite classes. By persuading elites of the benefits of biomedicine, the new system was made available to all classes within indigenous society; indeed the lower classes may well have benefited disproportionately.

Particularly in the Tibetan Buddhist world, the religious framework of indigenous medical practice translated into manifestations of cultural resistance. Political resistance, of the type noted in India, was largely absent due to the lack of national consciousness among Himalayan Buddhists, as was resistance based on notions of purity and pollution. The greatest resistance seems to have been to modernity in general, with biomedicine being an aspect of that modernity. Resistance to biomedicine was thus an active policy based on a specific world view, and while its use spread among indigenous elites over time, in 1950 there were still no indigenous practitioners of biomedicine in Tibet or Bhutan and only a handful in Sikkim.

In the postcolonial era, Chamba and Darjeeling districts, old stepping stones for the imperial project of introducing biomedicine into the Himalayas, came under full control of the newly independent Indian government; their medical services became part of those of the new state. Whereas Sikkim was brought into the new system in the 1970s after the Indian take-over, Bhutan, retaining its independence, formulated a different model for developing its medical system. Bhutan granted concessions to indigenous medical systems, for example clinics offering local and biomedical treatments under the same roof.

Biomedicine in exile
Of particular interest is the history of the interaction between Tibetan medicine and biomedicine in the period after 1959, when the Dalai Lama and approximately 100,000 of his followers went into exile in India. Biomedical treatment was made available to the exile community under the Indian state, and by the 1950s biomedical facilities were established within the Tibetan exile community, initially under private initiatives and subsequently under exile government control. Tibetan medicine, patronized and promoted by the exile government, was made available alongside biomedical treatment.

The preservation and promotion of Tibetan medicine has been part of the wider political project of preserving Tibetan culture in exile. Exposed to the wider world, however, the problematic elements of the project can be discerned. One obvious difficulty, which may, of course, be applied to all such terms, is defining ‘Tibetan medicine’. Historically, numerous medical practices existed within Tibet’s regions, as these were not systematized under central authority, they varied considerably in form and practice. The form chosen for preservation and promotion has been Tibetan Buddhist culture’s elite textbook-based system, and not, for example, women’s knowledge of local cures.

Alongside practical problems such as guaranteeing the supply of traditional herbs in Indian exile, difficulties remain in the promotion of Tibetan medicine as a scientific system. The identity of Tibetan medicine is also challenged by the extent of its interaction with biomedicine, as it enjoys considerable popularity among westerners, Indians, and Chinese, its survival as a separate system may well depend on outside patronage. Among the exile community, the resort to biomedicine is common, while practitioners of Tibetan medicine incorporating aspects of biomedical practice (such as the taking of blood pressure), place less emphasis on both ‘traditional’ practices (such as pulse-taking) and on religious aspects that once provided a clear framework to their medical initiatives. Many patients resort to both systems, choosing the one that affects their choice, including ease of access, cost, ideas of efficacy, and issues of personal and ethnic identity.

The intersection of Tibetan medicine as a state authorized system is an ongoing process, subject to negotiation, and affected by global political and economic factors; its final status remains unknown. It is, however, important to study both the history and the ongoing issues of medical interaction, not only in Tibet’s capitals and centres, but among all its peoples. By examining the process through which biomedicine was introduced into the Indo-Tibetan Himalayas, we may shed light on both colonial and postcolonial political structures and social processes.

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Astrology is India’s richest and most vital tradition: some 100,000 manuscripts covering various aspects of Indian astral sciences (Skt. jyotisāstra) exist worldwide. Since the end of the nineteenth century, classical philolo- gists and historians of Indian religion and science, such as H. Kern, A. Weber, and H.-G. Thilhaute, have made efforts to preserve and publish long-neglected Sanskrit astrological texts, emphasiz- ing their autonomous value. Arguably, only science historians have ever bother- ed to look at astrological practice, yet even they have limited their interest to contemporary mathematics or astron- omy, and clearly remain a long way from putting astrology in its proper social or intellectual context (Pingree 1997). The importance of medieval astrological texts in understanding the history of culture and ideas is more fully appreciated today, mainly due to David Pingree’s historical studies and his immense project. Census of the Exact Sciences in Sanskrit.

Yet, many questions arise: how can we explain astrology’s large-scale sur- vival and even its persistent prolifera- tion? What was its role in traditional society and within ancient bodies of knowledge? Why did and does astrolo- gy appeal to educated Indians? This paper briefly discusses these questions, emphasizing some methodological and hermeneutical considerations. For a long period the notion of ‘pseudo- sciences’ has hindered historical and contextual investigation into pheno- mena like astrology and other forms of divination. According to Richard Lemay, we cannot ‘understand medieval attitudes toward astrology by applying to this science our contempo- rary paradigm. (to say Kuhn’s conven- tional term) as this ... seems to foreclose in advance all avenues leading to the medieval mind, to its structural frame- work, and to the contents of its own dif- ferent paradigm’ (Lemay 1987:38). Only a hermeneutical approach can lay bare the key concepts that supported ancient science. Such an approach can also reveal the overall structure of ideas con- structed with these concepts, the local modes of cultural transmission of knowledge, methods of social control, and the nature of the cultural norms, that shaped the traditional epistemic field.

In the traditional Indian context, astrology formed an indispensable and intimate part of traditional science and cosmology. It appealed to educated Indians precisely because it was a rational system, or could be made to look like one. With reference to Greek civilization, G. Sarton once remarked that Greek astrology was the fruit of Greek rationalism, and received some kind of justification from the notion of cosmos, which is so arranged that no part is independent of the other parts and the whole.

The same can be said about the Indian cultural context. Acceptance of astrology as a learned and scientific study was a common attitude, if not the norm, hence the greatest Indian astronomers (Varāhamihira, Brah- magupta) were also astrologers. Both origin and subject matter of astrology were considered to be divine and astrology fascinated many of the great- est minds because it provided a total vision of reality, uniting the macro- cosmos with the human microcosm. It was due to the interest in prediction and control as well as to the belief that divination could be socially beneficial, that divination developed as a body of social and psychological knowledge.

Ancient applied science
In very ancient times, Indian rulers acquired their legitimacy by claiming a divine connection, for example descent from the Sun, Moon, or Jupiter. Hence the very first task for astrologers in the past was to establish such divine sanc- tion for the rulers. The Vaiśṇava-jyoti- mṛtyu (3.597) holds that the rise and fall of kings depends on the influence of planets, therefore a king should rely on his astrologers. Most of the royal char- cters issued by ancient and medieval Indian rulers bear dates with astro- nautical details, which were no doubt supplied by court astrologer. It is not by chance that this tradition was also actively cultivated by the patronage of the powerful Mahārājas. One of the reasons why astrology was, and still is, so widely used. Perhaps because it provides a tangible, visible template for predicting one’s fate. Trad- itionally it is thought that a person’s karma has caused him to be born at a time when the horoscope would lead to his fortunate or unfortunate condition. Hindus believe that heavenly bodies – the planets (graha), constellations (navámśi), and asterisms (śakti) – have a divine influence on the earth and on individ- ual people. These planetary effects are commonly considered as the fruits of karma.

The words of Judy F. Pugh, ‘These celestial forces begin to influence the person from the time of conception and birth. Hindu astrology offers schemati- zations of the influence of planets on the individual’s enkhoi and stresses the importance of birth time as the key point through which karma is made vis- ible and hence future actions and cir- cumstances are made known’ (Pugh 1986:115). In that sense, astrology as an applied science reflects popular under- standing of the manifestations of fate in the experiences of everyday life, and justifies itself as inspiring a healthy reli- gious and social attitude. Karma teach- ings serve as a means of legitimizing the application of astrology in religious and social practices.

Like most ancient Indian disciplines, astrology is traditionally believed to con- sist of eternally valid knowledge with eternally fixed contents and unchang- ing rules. Astrologers were always refer- ing to the most divine revelation of astro- nological knowledge, and they indulged in a free improvisation on certain themes. Like the other Indian āstras (traditional discip- lines), astrology was preserved within families of practitioners, and members of each such family would remain faithful over many generations to a particular tradition and they would generally not be interested in educating outsiders or in making innovations in their traditional learning.

References

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Sexual Discrimination in South India

In India’s patriarchal society boys are favoured and girls are seen as a burden to their families. The nation’s gender discrimination has many different guises, the most extreme of which is infanticide of girls and sex-selective abortion of female fetuses, even if the main manifestation of discrimination is negligence towards girls (in terms of care and alimentation). Notwithstanding its long history in India, infanticide is not merely an ancient practice that has survived into the present day, it is becoming more widespread. Sex-selective abortion, or foeticide, has a much shorter history, simply because of the medical techniques, available for the last quarter of century, it was not possible to identify the sex of a foetus. Why is it then that gender discrimination, even in its most extreme forms, proliferates in certain regions of South India?

By Stéphanie Velle

As difficult a question as this may seem, the answer can be found by combining a spatial analysis of sexual discrimination in South India, at different levels, with the results from a field study. Whereas the spatial analysis denotes significant variations in behaviour, particularly in Tamil Nadu, the field study enables us to give an account of the situation affecting both infanticide and sex-selective abortion of girls in that state. The skewed female-male ratio, as reflected in the demographic statistics of that state’s population, is a silent witness to these prac- tices. Sex ratios (the number of women per 1,000 men) are not merely telling of the violent ways in which unwanted daughters are disposed of; they can also give us a quantified idea of the status of women in a society. The sex ratios of a population as a whole is the composite product of sex ratio at birth, different mortality according to sex, and migration. The child sex ratio (CSR), the same female-male ratio but for children of 0-6 years is a much more valuable indi- cator of the situation of girls as it is not susceptible to migratory mechanisms. Since 1947, the sex ratio of the Indi- an population as a whole has been steadily diminishing (that is to say, the number of women per 1,000 men declined) and so has the child sex ratio. These developments have been far more pronounced in certain regions, such as in the north of the country. This declining sex ratio exposes specific discrimi- natory socio-cultural practices, which are firmly rooted in the Indian patriarch- al context. These ratios were statistic- ally recorded, but we were often at a loss to feature to the first time, especially because the lower numbers of females was only explained by mistaking the outcome of girls: girls were some- times not registered because they were not considered as a part of family.

Select-a-sex

The discriminatory socio-cultural practices of infanticide and foeticide (sex-selective abortion) of girls, both of which lead to a reduced female-male ratio to this day, have known a substan- tionally different historical development. Infanticide as a social practice is still practised in North India, not only con- tinues to be practised there, but has recently even spread to the South. Female foeticide, on the other hand, is a relatively recent his- tory but has been on a steady rise for the last thirty years.

There are several techniques that make female foeticide possible, namely le xy by sexing embryos and – more recently pre-implantation genetic diagnosis – amniocentesis, and ultrasound scan- ning. Of all these techniques, ultrasound is the most affordable, is constantly being improved: it is now possible to identify the sex of an embryo at between 13 and 14 weeks of pregnancy by means of a trans-vagal scan. Ever since India adopted new medical technologies to determine the sex of the unborn child, nothing has really taken place to arrest the rapid progression of female foeti- cide. The only legal action lies in a law named “The Pre-natal Diagnostic Tech- niques Regulation and Prevention of Misuse Act” that was adopted in 1994 and amended in 2001, but this law is not implemented. The difficulty in con- trolling these techniques lies in the fact that their propagation has mainly occurred within private infrastructures. As these are often not registred by the state, it is very difficult to establish regula- tions. Neighbourhood towards girls is even more widespread than the extreme forms of gender discriminative behav- iour, such as infanticide and sex-selec- tive abortion mentioned above. Neigh- bourhood towards girls exposes that the same alimentation expresses how parents are sex-selective in investing in their chil- dren. Their behaviour corresponds to the specific value that the family attaches to the gender of their child. Gen- der seems to be defined extremely early in comparison with the West: the sex of the child to be born is a crucial issue for the future of the family. The sex of a child can become a crucial dimension of demographic choices, especially in a patriarchal society, in a context where dowry is the norm, where social pres- sures force parents to pay for many cer- emonies during the course of their daughter’s life (puppy, pregnancy, marriage, grandchild’s birth, festi- vals and so forth), and where women often suffer a difficult destiny.

Man-made

If we now consider the local variation in the child sex ratio, as presented in a digitized map of South India, it becomes evident that sexual discrimi- nation varies greatly within the region (see explanation with map). Two large regions in Tamil Nadu, near Madurai and Salem-Dharmapuri respectively, characterized by an abnormally low proportion of girls, have been identified as showing the most pronounced sex- ual discrimination. The number of girls per 1,000 boys was already exception- ally low at 88 in 1991. This figure dropped even further to 86 in 2001, giving the area the lowest CSR of South India. Without doubt the absolute peak of discrimination against young girls in South India is reached in Salem district. If we examine local child sex ratios in 1991 in some places of the district, sex ratios registered even below 60. Seem at the micro level, in numerous villages in Salem with more than 2,000 inhabi- tants, there were twice as many boys as there were girls. The CSR in Salem district, all Indian districts with < 900 were located in the North of India in 1991. Ten years later, however, Salem had been joined by other Tamil districts, indicating that sexual discrimination in this state is increasing.

A close correspondence exists between districts with unbalanced child sex ratios, and districts where infanti- cide is recorded. This practice is one of the major causes of excessive and unnatural female mortality. In 1999, infanticide was behind 16 per cent of female infant mortality in Tamil Nadu and behind an astonishing 64 per cent of this rate in Salem (DANIDA Tamil Nadu Area Health Care Project, Phase III, 1999). Today, compared with other Indian states, Tamil Nadu has a low fertility rate. The decline of the state’s fertility rate was as recent as it was rapid. With its fertility rate of 1.3 in 1990, Tamil Nadu ranked second lowest after Ker- ala. Although lagging behind Kerala in some respects, Tamil Nadu is quite advanced in other social aspects as is indicated by its high literacy rate among girls, the high sex ratio of the popula- tion as a whole, the high-level of partic- ipation of women in work, and the low infant mortality rate. In view of these results, it is difficult to understand why discrimination in this state is so pre- dominant.

The two areas outlined on the map have something in common: they can all ex- amin anly explain this phenomenon. If we look at the Salem-Dharmapuri area, we notice that these two districts are dry areas. Irrigation is scarce, but agricul- ture is thriving; and industry, urbaniza- tion, and literacy were very late to devel- op. Dharmapuri is infamous as being the most backward one of Tamil Nadu, especially in respect of health care, which is very poorly provided for (in terms of maternal and infant mor- tality). In order to understand the emer- gence of practices of sexual discrimina- tion, we will now look more thoroughly at their socio-cultural roots.

Of rich and poor

In 2000, a micro-local study in a vil- lage consisting of five hamlets was con- ducted in Salem district, in an attempt to understand the context of sexual dis- crimination through the experience of the women, the traditions, and the rites and kinship structures of the local communities. The village belongs to the historical region of Kongu Nadu, which is a very dry agricultural area irrigated by wells, where traditional agriculture and very trans- port activities are also found. It was chosen for its location in a very sensi- tive zone in terms of the figures pre- sented above. Some 40 to 50 years ago, outside the tribal hills of Nilgiris (Todas), infanticide in Tamil Nadu was most probably almost unknown. My fieldwork in the Salem area supports the idea of a top-down diffusion model of infanticide: a specific upper caste of agricultural landed people may have pioneered infanticide, later transmit- ting this practice to other lower groups. The reason this caste took on family planning so early as it did was simply to avoid the division of land: such top- down diffusion could also be observed in North India, where landed castes dis- criminated against girls before lower castes adopted the same practice. In the mid-1960s, the agricultural revolution brought about changes in the rules of land ownership. In effect, the landed classes grew wealthier and were thus in the position to buy new land and, also, to diversify into other activities, such as the transport sector.

Private clinics

Excessive female mortality is also closely linked to the medical, penal, and political evolution in Tamil Nadu, especially for the private abortion clinics in the Salem area in the 1990s, which completely escaped appli- cation of the law. In effect, sex-selective abortion is presently illegal throughout the country, yet, the multiplication of private clinics and ultrasound scan equipment. The reproductive practices of women have been subject to the strong impact of the tech- nology, which they encounter when frequenting hospitals, dispensaries, and clinics for family planning, monitoring of pregnancies, and childbirth itself. As a result, there is a marked transition from abortion to infanticide, as the number of deliveries and patients in private clinics is rapidly increasing. Nonetheless, organizations working in the field have found that infanticide may be even more disapparing. The above examination of the social and spatial contours of the pheno- menon shows that the complex dynamics of sexual discrimination have their roots in the specificity of a regional cul- tural area, in the structural economic changes which mark rural India, and in the mechanisms of the diffusion of social change. Only an analysis inte-grating demography, economics, space, and anthropology can give a coherent impression of the increasing hold of sexual discrimination, which is taking ever greaver forms in contemporary Tamil Nadu.

One hypothesis would be that these developments taking place all over India, and even the appearance of the dowry in South India, in imitation of customs in North India, and that infan- ticide was a later consequence. The dis- appearance of the dowry can more logically be linked to the marked increase of the dowry thus directly correspond to rapid wealth acquisition among certain small farm- ers, and in particular among the women in the marriage market. Intermarriages gave way to marriages outside the fam- ily, based on economic choices, and the size of the dowry became the deci- sive criterion of choice. Due to the increased pressure of the dowry and also to decreasing female participation and pay in agriculture as a result of the Indian Agricultural Revo- lution, the position of women is deteri- orating. It seems that infanticide made its appearance subsequent to these changes, since the accumulation of property can be seen to harm the sta- tus of women. The fact that excessive female mortality appears more fre- quently among the wealthy classes, lends support to this socio-economic explanation.

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The Atoms of Meaning

Most linguists do not regard semantics (the systematic study of meaning) as a central part of their discipline. This is both strange and sad, because meanings are what language and communication, between language and language and cognition. Lately, however, meaning-based approaches have been making a comeback within the broad movements known as cognitive linguistics and functional linguistics. This article concentrates on the leading meaning-based theory of language, the natural semantic metalinguage or NSM theory originated by Anna Wierzbicka.

W

When we try to state the meaning of a word, there is a very real danger of getting ‘tangled up’ in other words. Most dictionaries fall into this trap because they do not observe a seemingly obvious principle: to explain the meaning of a word, one has to use other words that are simpler and easier to understand. Otherwise the definitions become circular, obscure, and inaccurate. We can see this in the Oxford Dictionary, when it defines sad as ‘sorrowful, mournful, showing or occasioning sorrow’, then surmises ‘mental distress caused by the loss of good or occurrence of evil’, and distress ‘severe pressure of pain, sorrow, etc. arising from mental or physical suffering’. Resorting to complex technical descriptors does not alleviate the problem, because in the end these too have to be understood in terms of simpler language meanings. When we step across a language barrier another problem comes up, which is the potentially distorting effect of using words from one language/culture (typically English) to analyse the meanings of another language/culture. Finding the atoms

According to Anna Wierzbicka and colleagues, the way out of these difficulties is to identify the simplest meanings expressed in languages, and then to use these to decode more complex meanings. Since simpler meanings are more likely to be shared across cultures, we may be able to reduce ethnocentrism in the process. For 30 years, Wierzbicka has been pursuing the ultimate vocabulary of simple indefinable concepts: semantic primes.

To get a sense of what semantic primes are like, compare words like ‘Mary said something to me’. An expression like verbally would be too vague because the terms verbal and express are complex and difficult to understand than say itself. We might consider something like ‘Mary did something because she wanted me to know something’, but this could fit many other actions apart from saying. Because it appears to resist paraphrase in simpler terms, say is a good candidate for the status of semantic prime.

It is a different story with ask, in ‘Mary asked me what was the weather like’. We can immediately make a start at a paraphrase: ‘Mary said something to me because she wanted to know something, and because of this she wanted me to say something’. Though this rough paraphrase is not perfect, it clearly shows that the meaning of ask can be broken down into simpler terms including say, want, and know.

We do not want to give the impression that identifying semantic primes is a simple matter. It is not. For every proposed prime – and there are about 60 of them – there is a long and somewhat complicated history of argumentation and investigation. Well-established primes include nominal meanings like: and you, someone, and something, evaluative and descriptive meanings like good and bad, big and small, verbal meanings like do and happen, know, think, want and say, spatial and temporal meanings like here and now, before and after, above and below, and logical concepts like if and not.

Linguistic universals

Research indicates that semantic primes exist as words or word-like elements (including affixes) in all languages. As one can see from the map, the languages that have been studied from this point of view come from many parts of the world, from many different cultural zones, and from many different language families. Some tricky technical issues can arise in identifying primes across languages. There is no requirement that the expression of a prime be simple in form. For example, in English the prime a long time is expressed by a fixed phrase (most languages have a single word for it). More importantly, there is the problem of polysemy: the phenomenon whereby a single word can have several related meanings. Like other common words, exponents of semantic primes are often polysemous, and they can be polysemous in different ways in different languages. For example, in Yankunytjatjara the exponent of say is uŋkangku, which can also be used (in a different meaning) about birds singing and about the wind blowing. Careful language-internal analysis is necessary before claims about semantic primes can be established.

Semantic primes are not isolated concepts. They combine according to certain grammatical patterns that appear to be universal, in the sense that they are ‘wired into’ all languages. This opens up the way for a new meaning-based theory of universal grammar (Goedde and Wierzbicka 2002), though it is not possible to delve more deeply into it here.

Using semantic primes to crack the code

If only 60 concepts are simple and universal, then all other word meanings are complex and, potentially, language-specific. This includes ordinary words that seem basic from a monolingual perspective, like the English go, hit, drink, break, hot, red, and rock. All these words lack exact equivalents in some other languages. Even more interesting are words for emotions, relationships, values, speech-act activities, and so on: concepts which people use to think about and make sense of their lives. For example, emotion terms that are often expressed by English speakers as basic, such as angry, sad, and happy, vary in meaning across languages.

One of the main theoretical and practical challenges for linguistic semantics is to explicate such subtle but important differences in the conceptual structures of the world’s languages. I will give a highly abbreviated example (cf. Goedde 2000) of the technique of exploration of semantic primes, using one of the cultural key words of the Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) language: saher.

Sahar: a Malay cultural value

Sahar (verbal form sahkar, abstract noun sahak) clearly means something both broader and more important than its conventional translation patient. Certainly one can sahar menangis ‘patiently want’, but the injunction to sahar also can be addressed to someone who is annoyed, agitated, grieving and distressed in and contexts the English patient does not fit at all e.g. jangandang marah! Sahar! Don’t be mad! Calm down!; Sahar, jangan menangis buat sings! ‘Be calm, don’t cry so loud’. Kusabaran is an important Islamic virtue (sahar itself is an Arabic loan word). On the Islamic view, misfortunes and suffering should be seen as tests from God; if we can sustain our kusabaran, this will show we are kera-man faithful. This helps explain why characteristic Malay advice in difficult situations is to kusabaran ‘endure it, forebear’. The old Malay tradition (adat) also strongly favours staying calm in troubling situations, since it is only by staying calm that one can follow the traditional counsel to exercise caution in all matters, resist impulsive behaviour, and preserve harmonious social relations. In my view, the meaning of sahar can be spelled out in semantic primes as follows:

X was sahar [at that time] – at that time X felt something bad because this X could have thought: I don’t want this.

I want to do something now X did not think like this because X didn’t want to think anything like this.

It is good if a person can be like this.

The wording of the concept ‘felt something bad’ is intentionally vague, so as to be compatible with anything from mild irritation to great suffering. The key idea is that a sahar person could have formed an immediate imperative intention: ‘I don’t want this, I want to do something now’, but did not, because he or she did not want to think anything like this’. Being sahar is having a certain mental discipline.

The final component adds a strong moral endowment: ‘it is good if a person can be like this’.

Using the same technique of exploration, the meaning of English patient can be unpacked and compared point by point with that of sahar. Both concepts, furthermore, can be culturally contextualized by a new approach to cultural description that employs semantic primes as a notation, namely, the theory of cultural scripts. Just as a small number of chemical elements can generate an enormous number of complex substances, it seems that the enormous diversity of meanings encoded in the words and grammar of the world’s languages are the product of a small number of semantic elements combined in manifold ways. Just as the discovery of the chemical elements and of their combinatorial properties opened new vistas for chemistry, the comprehensive description of the atoms of meaning can be expected to open new vistas for the study of language, thought, and culture.

References


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Poet of Word and Presence

An Interview with Ashok Vajpeyi

By Renata Czekalska

How would you describe the importance of poetic work in your country? Is poetry in India as vast-ly read as it is written?

AV: India is a multilingual country—one of the largest in the world. Poetry is written in most of its languages. But while it is quite vastly read and appreciated in Bengali, Malayalam, Oriya, Urdu, and Kannada, my own language Hindi, in spite of having a poetry comparable to the best being written anywhere in the world, does not have a substantial reading public for significant poetry. Fortunately, this circumstance has not made Hindi poetry hermetic and exclusive: it remains open, wide-ranging, and undeniably varied. From a prayer...to an abuse...to celebrating life and living, Hindi poetry speaks in many tongues. From a prayer...to an abuse...to an essay, Hind

RC: After publishing Tho

RC: How would you describe the influence of current politics on Hindi literature?

AV: Politics is a great force in our time and has influenced Hindi poetry deeply in many ways, some of them positive. It has brought, for instance, a sense of the real social issues and concerns, and a clash of values to the realm of poetry. It has emphasized the social role and responsibility of both the poet and poetry. It has created a sense of togetherness, of participation, of being part of a larger whole, and it has certainly expanded the geography of human sympathy and solidarity in poetry. Negatively, however, politics has usurped the place of religion and spirituality, relegated issues of personal and inner reality to the margins, and created a false sense of power, social importance, and impact. It has encouraged, unfortunately, a politics of statement, of exclusion, and tried to drown resonances and intimations of history. Significantly, political influence of any consequence is largely Marxist and leftist. The rightist politics in India has hardly provoked any significant creativity, given its innate aridity.

RC: Do you think that in present times poetry should become engaged in political issues and, if so, does such engagement, in your opinion, bring any practical results?

AV: Yes, I remain very much the son of a very religious but unhappy mother. I did receive, largely from her and my grandparents, an initiation into liberal, complex, and pluralistic Hinduism. It was a proper Hindu upbringing, but not rigid or exclusivist. We were also exposed to liberalism, and the human openness of Islam, Christiani-

AV: You are sometimes called a classical poet. Can you suggest why?

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The Wonder that is India

A Farewell Seminar for Dirk Kolff

Professor Dirk Kolff has left his mark most emphatically on the social history of medieval and early modern South Asia. In due respect of his interest in the genesis of pre-modern social and ethnic groups, the speakers at the ‘Social Dynamics in Mughal India’ seminar re-examined and discussed the changing role and status of four social categories: Sufis, warriors, merchants, and peasants. All speakers agreed that one of Kolff’s most significant contributions to the field of South Asian Studies has been his insistence on the open, fluid, and highly conscriptive nature of such categories, which today appear rather closed, rigid, and ascriptive.

Dirk Kolff in the Kern Institute’s library

Information

Dirk Kolff became Emeritus Professor of Leiden University on 1 March 2003. The above seminar to celebrate Kolff’s contribution to the field of South Asian Studies received financial supported from the IIAS and CNWS (Research Studies at Leiden, a field becoming exceedingly rare in present academic circles).

By Jos Campens

Several historians of South Asia who have been influenced by Kolff’s scholarship were invited to convenor Jos Campens, Simon Digby, Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, Diet van Santen, and Polish. She also translates works of Hindi writers into Polish, and Polish poetry into Hindi. rcezhal@mail.ifig.edu.pl

Aashok Vajpeyi is an Indian poet, essayist, literary critic, and translator of poetry, who writes in Hindi. He was the founder and first Vice Chancellor (1993–2002) of Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University in New Delhi, and is author of 19 poetry books (10 collections and 11 volumes of selected poems). In 1996 he received the Sahitya Akademi Award. His poems have been translated into several Indian languages as well as into English, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Hungarian, Norwegian, Arabic, and Polish.

Aashok_vajpeyi@yahoo.com

Dr Renata Czekalska

October 2003, Leiden, the Netherlands

In simplistic times, does a difficult word know its own fading away? In simplistic times, does a difficult word know its own fading away?

Does a Falling Leaf know

Does a Falling Leaf know its going to die?

But everyone remembers its existence

But everyone remembers its existence

Does an outlier in world historical terms and, consequently, that state building and administrative consolidation in early modern India faced unusually difficult obstacles. It was only in the nineteenth century that the British colonial regime succeeded where the Mughals had ultimately failed.

In conclusion, Richards suggested that we reconsider Kolff’s observations, and assemble and analyse the hundreds of discrete accounts of endless minor wars occurring between 1757 and 1857, which still lie buried in district gazetteers, regional histories, and military dispatches and have yet to be examined. Only through such research will we be able to correct the current impression that British conquest was somehow benign and bloodless.

Dirk Kolff expanded on Hauser’s observation by highlighting the continuity from the medieval into the modern. As will be shown in his forthcoming monograph, Kolff may have retired but his ongoing fascination with the wonder that is India will continue.

Dr Jos Campens is teaching South Asian history at the Kern Institute of Leiden University. His research concerns the geographical history of the medieval and early-modern periods and focuses on Indo-Islamic studies, European expansion, and interregional trade, all in a comparative, world-historical perspective.

J.J.C. Campens @l.t.ardenuniv.nl

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A mosque, a Tamil temple, China Town, and window shopping en français: it does not require a trip around the world to encounter such variety, but a five-minute walk through the centre of Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius. The bustling streets of this ethnically diverse island represent another break with the past. Interaction between ethnic communities has evolved as Mauritius’ low-income, agriculturally based economy developed into a middle-income, diversified one. In contrast to the sugarcane industry and its historically rooted overlap between ethnicities, tourism, textiles, and offshore banking employ multi-ethnic work forces. Due to increased interaction between different communities at work, the awareness of each others’ ethnic habits has gradually risen.

Even though there are still a considerable number of mono-ethnic work forces, occupation is less important in defining ethnic boundaries than it was in the 1950s. Undeniably, class still correlates with ethnicity: Franco-Mauritians and Sino-Mauritians are still over-represented in the private sector, while poverty is most striking in the Creole, Muslim, and Hindu communities. Nonetheless, educational levels have risen, and all ethnic communities today are themselves socio-economically stratified.

Less clearly linked to historical change, but of great importance to the interaction between ethnicities, is the Kreol language. Kreol was already in frequent use in the 1950s, but nowadays almost all Mauritians, apart from the Franco-Mauritians who stick to French, use Kreol in everyday life. Kreol is used to overcame ethnic differences and unite Mauritians, hence the prime minister will always address the nation in Kreol.

The evolving definition of ethnic boundaries shows that the correlation between ethnicity and socio-economic and political status has decreased, due to the diversification of the economy and the independence of Mauritius. Nowadays, differences between ethnic communities are primarily emphasized by religion and origin, aspects that belong to the core of ethnic identity and have a more private character than occupation and political colour. By the same token that ethnic boundaries become more fluid, the importance of a shared language (Kreol) to enhance communication once more illustrates the increased interaction between communities.

References

By Tijo Salverda

A Tamil during the fire walking, which is part of Tamil New Year’s celebrations (1 January 2009) and is attend ed by many Mauritians from outside the Tamil community.

A Tamil temple in Port Louis.

Changing Definitions of Ethnic Boundaries on Mauritius

This article examines the correlation, over time, of socio-economic and political status on the one hand and ethnicity on the other, and analyses the impact of historical trends in Mauritian society on the (fading) importance of language and religion in defining ethnicity. I do this by focusing on the changing definitions of ethnic boundaries, the social demarcations that mark the differences between ethnicities. These boundaries, flexible and changing over time, illustrate what is most important in distinguishing ethnic communities from one another.

Mauritius was uninhabited until 1508 when the Dutch settled on the island, which became a hub between their colonies in southern Africa and the Indonesian archipelago. The Dutch brought in the first slaves to labour on sugarcane plantations. The development of the island, however, took off with the French, who replaced the Dutch after the latter abandoned the island in 1750. The French built up the sugarcane industry, importing for their plantations large numbers of slaves, mainly from Madagascar and other parts of Africa. The heritage of the French period still has a strong presence in Mauritian society: the descendants of the French colonizers are the current Franco-Mauritians, a small but economically powerful group. The descendants of the slaves are found today’s Creole community, the French-speaking Kreol the language most used in everyday life, evolved during the period of French rule.

In 1810, the British captured Mauritius from the French, and stayed until 1968 when the island gained its independence. The British were content to administer the island, as the well-organized French planters elite was seen as an asset, no attempt was made to replace them, an important reason why the influence of French culture still prevails. Many of the Britons who settled on Mauritius eventually assimilated into the Franco-Mauritian community.

The British period was nevertheless an important chapter in Mauritian history. After 1835, when slavery was formally abolished, large numbers of indentured labourers were brought in from British India. The descendants of these Indian labourers are divided into a large Hindu community and a small Muslim community, and make up the majority of the current Mauritian population. Although official ethnic classification was abandoned in 1982, large parts of the Mauritian population still define themselves and each other by their ethnic background. The classifications most used in everyday life are based on categories from the last ethnic census of 1972, which divided the population into Hindus (52 per cent), Creoles (25 per cent), Muslims (16 per cent), Sino-Mauritians, whose ancestors came as free men from China during the British period (5 per cent), and Franco-Mauritians (2 per cent).

Fault lines

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Mauritius was a colonial society, strongly class-based, and reliant on its sugarcane plantation industry.

Although all sectors employed people of different ethnicities, the division of labour generally followed ethnicity. Occupation and class therefore strengthened ethnic boundaries. Franco-Mauritians, owning all the large plantations and sugarcane refining factories, were at the top of the socio-economic pyramid. The Creoles, having left their work in the sugarcane fields after the abolition of slavery, mainly worked as civil servants and artisans, either in sugarcane refining factories or elsewhere. Sino-Mauritians worked in the retail sector and owned most of the small shops on the island, whereas Hindus and Muslims were over-represented in the agricultural sector, working as labourers.

Over and above class and occupation, religion, place of origin, and language reinforced the confines of ethnicity. The Creoles, Franco-Mauritians and part of the Sino-Mauritian community were Christian, mainly Catholics. Franco-Mauritians spoke French, Creoles and significant parts of other communities spoke Kreol, and parts of the mainly rural Hindu community spoke Bhojpuri, a variant of Hindi.

The 1990s witnessed significant changes in Mauritian society, causing ethnic boundaries to correlate more with political boundaries. Politics Parcours an activity not only for the benefit of the elite, but also for the Mauritian majority, consisting mainly of poor Hindus, Creoles, and Muslims. Politicians’ interest in the poor at first disregarded their ethnic background, but this changed quickly. The increased attention for the plight of the masses engendered a new kind of politics that emphasized and exaggerated ethnic sentiment. Hindu politicians, for one, hoped to gain power by mobilizing the Hindu community; they emphasized the economically inferior status of plantation labourers, but ignored similarities between Hindu and Creole workers. The emancipation of the majority and increased interaction between different communities in national politics induced that ethnic differences were stressed more.

In the years preceding 1968, tension between the communities grew over the issue of independence, ultimately leading to violent clashes. Mainly Hindus supported the political party favouring independence; large parts of the Franco-Mauritian, Creole, and Muslim communities, fearing Hindu domination in an independent Mauritius, did not.

While the battle was won in favour of independence and violent confrontations between ethnic communities were temporarily, the new rulers inherited a society divided along ethnic lines.

Diversification

Thirty-five years of independence have removed the sharp edges from ethnic boundaries defined as political boundaries. Although Hindus dominate politics and the public sector, the government has been making efforts to better reflect the composition of the population in public sector employ ment. The 1960s’ exaggeration of ethnic sentiment is a thing of the past, though certain political parties, usually the marginal ones, occasionally play the ethnic card to gain support. A clear and hopeful sign that contemporary politics play less on ethnic sentiments can be seen in the person of the current Franco-Mauritian Prime Minister, Paul Bérenger. The fact that he is the first non-Hindu prime minister since independence signifies a break with the past. The decreasing importance of eth nic differences within politics indicates a preference for fruitful interaction.

Mauritius’ changing economy represents another break with the past. Interaction between ethnic communities has evolved as Mauritius’ low-income, agriculturally based economy developed into a middle-income, diversified one. In contrast to the sugarcane industry and its historically rooted overlap between ethnicities, tourism, textiles, and offshore banking employ multi-ethnic work forces. Due to increased interaction between different communities at work, the awareness of each others’ ethnic habits has gradually risen.

Even though there are still a considerable number of mono-ethnic work forces, occupation is less important in defining ethnic boundaries than it was in the 1950s. Undeniably, class still correlates with ethnicity: Franco-Mauritians and Sino-Mauritians are still over-represented in the private sector, while poverty is most striking in the Creole, Muslim and Hindu communities. Nonetheless, educational levels have risen, and all ethnic communities today are themselves socio-economically stratified.

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The evolving definition of ethnic boundaries shows that the correlation between ethnicity and socio-economic and political status has decreased, due to the diversification of the economy and the independence of Mauritius. Nowadays, differences between ethnic communities are primarily emphasized by religion and origin, aspects that belong to the core of ethnic identity and have a more private character than occupation and political colour. By the same token that ethnic boundaries become more fluid, the importance of a shared language (Kreol) to enhance communication once more illustrates the increased interaction between communities.

Notes
- The figures are approximations and thus do not add up to 100 per cent, while the classifications are simplications of reality. Most ethnicities have sub-classifications, known to its members but not always to the members of other ethnicities. They are therefore not used in this context.
- English is the hardly used official language of Mauritius. French is the language of the media and is often used in formal situations.
- The figures are approximations and thus do not add up to 100 per cent, while the classifications are simplications of reality. Most ethnicities have sub-classifications, known to its members but not always to the members of other ethnicities. They are therefore not used in this context.
This article examines the situation of the people known as Creoles, primarily the descendants of African and Malagasy slaves who currently live in Mauritius. It focuses specifically on a local sociocultural phenomenon brand- ed as the n-Kreol partly results from racial stereotyping by the wealthier classes, Creoles and non-Creoles alike. In many postcolonial states today, dominant paradigms on culture and identity emphasize the boundaries of identity, thereby ignor- ing that social change and globalization make these boundaries between human groups rather fluid. Such views on culture and identity facilitate specific claims to cultural preservation and empowerment, while dismissing or devaluing the rights and cultural resources of all hybrids in society. By [111x167]the late twentieth century, a Creole was someone of European, African and Malagasy descent. Today, Creoles are largely defined as the inhabitants of Mauritius. As slaves they experienced Dutch, French, and British rule. Today the n-Kreol consists of a wider variety of people of Afri- can and Malagasy slaves that arrived on the island over a period of 300 years. As slaves they experienced Dutch, French, and British rule. Today the n-Kreol and its contribution to diversity in the discourse on origins and memo- ry making in Mauritius by the strong Nepalese of Rodrigues Island, those ethnic groups able to lay claim to distinct cultural origins and a singular homeland and, thus, groups with a potent fiction of homogeneity, are socially valued the most. Groups that possess mobile cultural resources such as caste, race, or religion use these to refer to particular geographical and spiritual homelands in life rituals, to strengthen and maintain the community, its cultural integrity, and the polit- ical constitution of the group. The dom- inant cultural paradigm does not allow for the accommodation of creole iden- tity. Until very recently Creole identity has not been publicly articulated in the form of pilgrimages, and religious and cultural symbols. As a result, Mauri- tians in general argue that Creoles ‘suf- fer’ a lack of identity, which finds expression in the phenomenon of le malaise Créole.

Findings and interpretations
Ethnography revealed that in each of the five geographically distinct sites of my research (Centre-de-Flacq, Karina, Roche Bois, Chamarel, and Le Morne village) those ethnic groups able to lay claim to distinct cultural origins and a singular homeland and, thus, groups with a potent fiction of homogeneity, are socially valued the most. Groups that possess mobile cultural resources such as caste, race, or religion use these to refer to particular geographical and spiritual homelands in life rituals, to strengthen and maintain the community, its cultural integrity, and the political constitution of the group. The dominant cultural paradigm does not allow for the accommodation of creole identity. Until very recently Creole identity has not been publicly articulated in the form of pilgrimages, and religious and cultural symbols. As a result, Mauritian society may argue that Creoles ‘suffer’ a lack of identity, which finds expression in the phenomenon of le malaise Créole.

However, le malaise Créole is a complex phenomenon that is differently expressed in each location. This view challenges the dominant, primordial view that the phenomenon is the result of the lazy, spendthrift nature of Creoles, who have not been resourceful enough to make use of the opportunities that they have been granted since independence in 1968. My findings also challenge the pre-Creole and minority view that le malaise Créole would be the experience of victimiza- tion through racial and cultural domi- nation. In Mauritius, le malaise Créole can be seen as a condition of hybrideity in a society that has devalued such hybrideity. Its manifestation is sympto- matic of the experience of social and cultural oppression. To appear more homogeneous and to deal with the painful memories of the past, the Creoles have adopted diverse strategies. Many Creoles have accepted orthodox Christianity, adopted European standards of fashion, and accumulated material goods that assist in authentica- tion over the past 160 years. Those who have retained some Creole characteristics that ease interethnic communication and provide a measure of social flexibility and meaning. However, there are no ‘pure’ Hindus or Muslims in Mauritius. Converts to Islam from among other things. First, that theCreoles deal with their past and its impact on their iden- tity. Both the Bois and Rodrigues main- tain and appeal to traditions and culture that they perceive to be uniquely theirs. By positively valuing their ‘roots’, they give a meaning to their background, thus affirming their homogeneity. The Ilois for example established their place in the discourse on origins and memo- ry making in Mauritius by the strength of their cultural and cultural goods necessary for the demonstration of culture. However, it is not only the display of tangible cul- tural goods that assists in authenticating culture and identity. The Kreol Morisyen in Karina, like the Kreol Morisyen in Chamarel and Le Morne utilize the stories from the past (in other words intangible culture) to achieve a sense of shared history and identity. These stories confer a measure of solidarity among the residents and encourage outsiders to perceive them as belonging to a homogeneous group.

However, as Mauritian society becomes more heterogeneous, efforts to indicate homogeneous via shared his- tory are being challenged in all three sites. In these communities, many are now involved in achieving personal eco- nomic gain and therefore identify themselves more with class than with ethnicity or history.

Not until Mauritians take account of the reality of hybridization will pheno- mena such as le malaise Créole begin to disappear. In turn, Mauritians now give a meaning to their background, thus affirming their homogeneity. The Ilois for example established their place in the discourse on origins and memo- ry making in Mauritius by the strength of their cultural and cultural goods necessary for the demonstration of culture. However, it is not only the display of tangible cultural goods that assists in authenticating culture and identity. The Kreol Morisyen in Karina, like the Kreol Morisyen in Chamarel and Le Morne utilize the stories from the past (in other words intangible culture) to achieve a sense of shared history and identity. These stories confer a measure of solidarity among the residents and encourage outsiders to perceive them as belonging to a homogeneous group. However, as Mauritian society becomes more heterogeneous, efforts to indicate homogeneous via shared his- tory are being challenged in all three sites. In these communities, many are now involved in achieving personal eco- nomic gain and therefore identify themselves more with class than with ethnicity or history.
Beating Time

Concepts of Rhythm in the Nāṭyaśāstra

The Nāṭyaśāstra occupies a unique position in Sanskrit literature as the earliest extant source on drama, dance, and music. Alongside its value as a historical document, this encyclopaedic work has left its mark on the subsequent development of the performing arts in South Asia. It thus contains clues that shed light on hitherto unexplained aspects of the performing arts, past and present.

By Narinder Mohkamsing

Traditionally ascribed to the legendary sage Bharata and dating from around the beginning of the common era, the Nāṭyaśāstra covers almost all aspects of dramaturgy, including such subsidiary themes as the origin of drama, stagecraft, ritual preliminaries, and poetics. Several editions and translations are available, though hardly any meet the standards of modern scholarship. Given its intrinsic value, and the necessity of reliable editions, it is imperative that new efforts be made to publish a truly critical, fully indexed, and newly translated edition. With the proper approach and determination, this should be possible, for its individual chapters as well as for the work as a whole.

Ever since the (re)discovery of the Nāṭyaśāstra in 1856, attention has focused on its theatrical and literary chapters; those on music and musical instruments have drawn little attention. To make matters worse, the entire section on music (chapters 18-55) is the most difficult part of the work, within which the śāla chapter is generally considered the most impenetrable. Focusing on the latter chapter, which treats śāla or rhythmic organization, my study addresses one of the most challenging issues of contemporary music, viz. the origin of the notion of cyclicity, or the cyclical progression of time (Mohkamsing 2005).

Musicalological relevance

Because of its antiquity and obscurity, the Nāṭyaśāstra is usually considered of no little value to understanding contemporary performing arts. This applies particularly to music, which has passed through numerous phases of remarkable change and development, especially in the last three to four hundred years. Despite the hiatus of two millennia, some remarkable parallels can be drawn between ancient and modern musicalconceptions of time and action. Notable in this regard is the similarity between the notion of cyclicity so clearly observed in contemporary Indian music, and the rudiments of a comparable mode of progression in early musical conceptions such as the śāla-songs (extended songs). As will be seen below, the cyclical procedures present in these śāla-songs are described in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

The presence and origin of the idea of cyclicity of time, both in ancient and in modern Indian music, has yet to be satisfactorily explained. Usually, however, the origin of this idea is traced back to the doctrine of cosmic cycles, which measures the periodic creation and destruction of the universe in units such as yuga (age), kāla (eon), and manvantara (forty eons). According to the cosmology of the Epics and Purāṇas, these processes continually repeat themselves in fixed patterns (Bāumu 1992:40 f.). Since this doctrine appears to have developed in post-Vedic periods, but before the Nāṭyaśāstra, it may safely be assumed to have influenced the music theory of the latter.

The basic idea of repetition is present in the Nāṭyaśāstra, in such notions as nīrūti, upārūti, and pariśārūti. Most of these terms, however, refer specifically to repetitions of parts of a pattern, involving variation of tempo through acceleration or deceleration and do not explain the phenomenon of cyclicity from a musical and rhythmical point of view.

Passing on the rhythm

Evidence proving the presence of cyclicity in ancient Indian music is concealed in the nature of a beat called sanānipita in ancient rhythmic theory. The study of its role and position in the śāla-songs reveals hidden clues that ultimately reveal the cyclical procedures in ancient music. The Sanānipita is the strongest beat in śāla chéironomy. It usually occurs at the beginning of a basic śāla-pattern, but when the pattern is expanded, the sanānipita moves to its end. This seems to imply a transposition of accent, but closer analysis reveals that it is only a matter of perception and sensation: the beginning and end of successive patterns coincide on the punctuation of sanānipita.

The śāla-songs are described as a composition of seventeen beats, where the last (or seventeenth) beat has to be a sanānipita. In reality, the song has only sixteen beats and under ordinary circumstances the sixteenth beat carries the accentuated sanānipita. Here the enigmatic description of the śāla-songs, which measures the periodic creation and destruction of the universe, is nowhere more convincing than in these passages. The song thus has a sixteen-one beat structure. Once the song progresses, its beats assume a one-fifteenth-one structure, where the last beat always coincides with the first beat of the following cycle. The total number of beats in a pattern thus remains constant (sixteen), whereas the ‘seventeenth’ beat occupies an axial or transitory position; it assumes the dual function of concluding and opening two successive cycles.

As a strong concluding beat, the sanānipita carries the main accent and is responsible for creating the sensation of cadence and cyclicity. By shifting the point of conclusion from the sixteenth to the seventeenth beat (the first of the following pattern), the cadence or rhythm is extended to the following cycle. The interlocking of the initial and final beats of successive patterns creates the typical flow or continuity of a cyclical procedure.

The function of the sanānipita proves that the ancient compositions described in the Nāṭyaśāstra were performed in a rhythmic manner. Notably, the characteristic nature of the sanānipita resembles that of sam in modern Hindustani music.

One may conclude, at least from a musicological point of view, that the Nāṭyaśāstra is the first source to explain rhythmic cyclicity in Indian music. Even though this is not done explicitly, the description of certain songs shows that the author was familiar with the idea of cyclical procedures. It therefore seems plausible that elements of the older cosmic notion of cyclicity found their way into the Nāṭyaśāstra, and thus also into the subsequent tradition of the performing arts in South Asia.

References

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Notes
1. The name śāla, or “extended” (song) itself indicates that with the employment of new techniques such as cyclic repetition, the given melodies were ‘extended’ or ‘expanded’ as desired.
2. Sam is the first and most important beat in a rhythmic cycle and figures as the pivotal beat in creating the sensation of cyclicity by exploiting (i.e. by easing and building) the tension between beginning and finality, expectation and fulfillment.
The upsurge of interest in management values can be traced back to political demands for a smaller state. Social scientists have observed that the old welfare state, giving way to the watchman state where social security, health insurance, and public utilities are privatized. Thus economic life is slipping away from parliamentary control and regulation. This freedom has some economic advantages, but it does not preclude irresponsible and downright fraud.

The slipping away of public control mechanisms seems to encourage managerial misbehaviour. Promoters of business ethics in the United States and Europe have understood that the growing private sector requires clear formulations of ethically acceptable corporate behaviour. Thus ‘values in business’, ‘values-based management’, ‘ethics in management’, and so forth, have entered the market of management teaching.

**Hindu values and business**

Concern for ethical corporate behaviour was first expressed in India in the early 1980s. The then Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, informally urged Swami Yuktaananda, a monk and follower of the Shri Ramakrishna movement, to promulgate Indian values for the moral improvement of Indian management. Indian values, it was claimed, derived from the inclusivist (Hindu) Vedanta philosophy. Vedantic Hinduism (like Christianity in the Western world) in the 1980s came to be regarded as a cultural resource for Indian managers. It was thought that values awareness would prevent corruption. Less corruption in the end meant less financial loss.

The target groups for values training were managers of private and public sector companies, high-ranking civil servants, and executives of the Indian Administrative Service. Promoting values in Indian government, however, inevitably has political implications.

In the 1990s, the Hindu conservative Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power at the national level. This boosted efforts to promote Hindu values in management. Professors working at institutes of management in Calcutta, Lucknow, and Ahmedabad began to lecture on Indian (read Hindu) ethics for management and developed special training courses for Indian managers. While the number of courses is steadily increasing, the serious scholarly literature on the subject remains small.

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One scholar with an international reputation has held undisputed sway over the field since the 1990s: S.K. Chakraborty (Management Centre for Human Values, Calcutta). Author of about twenty books, Chakraborty practically initiated the Hindu values movement in management literature. Other notable contributors to this literature are the genuinely concerned author R.C. Sekhar (T.A. Pai Management Institute, Manipal) and Arindam Choudhury, the genuinely concerned author R.C. Sekhar (T.A. Pai Management Institute, Manipal) and Arindam Choudhury, the.

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Serious authors like S.K. Chakraborty address financial and political corruption, entrepreneurial irresponsibility, ‘creative’ accounting, and fraudulent practices in the stock mar- kets and commercial banking. These real problems require...
Local Protectionism

The Bottleneck of China’s Economic Development

By HOU Yu

Regional protectionism has long been blamed for economic inefficiencies and investment disincentives in China. Although the term generally refers to the differential way in which local governments treat local and non-local products and enterprises, the practice differs from place to place. In some cases, local governments allow small, polluting firms to churn out resource-depleting, copycat, or low quality goods. In other instances, local governments issue laws and regulations that discriminate against non-local products and enterprises. This generally results in the formation of licensing and technology factories, especially those producing household appliances such as TVs, refrigerators, and recorders. As the provinces all have unique industrial structures, their protected industries do not complement each other. The result, rather, is wasted resources, competition between regions, and, on a global level, uncompetitiveness.

Local governments everywhere have incentives to protect local industries. They rely on these industries for tax revenue and also care about maintaining local employment, which is important for social stability and, in democratic states, for electoral success. Local governments thus often find it prudent to erect trade barriers to protect local industries from inter-regional competition. The problem is similar to protectionism in international trade; it should, however, be easier to ensure smooth inter-regional trade as national governments retain authority over their local counterparts. In the United States, for example, the constitution prohibits interstate tariffs. This has greatly facilitated the inter-regional trade of goods and services and has led to regional specialization in industrial production.

Policy discrepancies

In the period of China’s economic transition, an unfortunate combination of economic policies on central and local level is the primary cause of local protectionism. Prior to 1978, China had a highly centralized fiscal system. All tax revenue first went to the central government. Its planning commission had the authority to determine the expenditures of local governments and allocated revenue from the central pool accordingly. This system removed tax revenue and expenditure from the hands of local government; and provided few incentives for local protection policies.

Since the 1980s, China has implemented numerous fiscal reforms. The “tax contract” system (shuangqiao houyuan zhi) and “tax assignment” system (shuang qiu zhi) gave local governments more autonomy in fiscal matters. At the same time, greater local autonomy in the provision of scientific and technological infrastructure has enabled local governments to invest in their own projects, determine the allocation of resources and engage in foreign trade. The increase in the number of rural township enterprises has strengthened the power of local governments. Before 1979, the central government’s tax revenue accounted for 70 per cent of the total, with the remaining 30 per cent going to local governments. Since the reforms, this ratio has reversed.

In the early 1980s, the policy of “let some people and some regions prosper before others” created another kind of regional protectionism. Due to its implementation, a growing wealth gap has sprung up between the regions. China’s southeastern coastal areas, such as Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shandong, and Guangdong, have become fairly well off due to rapid economic growth while the provinces of China’s midwest, such as Henan, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, and Guizhou, remain poor.

The benefits of maintaining local employment are obvious and universal; as mentioned earlier, local governments are concerned with employment in their respective regions of governance. It is widely acknowledged that there exists an enormous amount of surplus labour within Chinese state-owned enterprises of all types. To ensure social stability, both local and central governments are compelled to maintain employment of these workers. Most state-owned enterprises are administered by local governments and remain important political constituencies for local government officials.

Local governments thus do their utmost to develop local economies, in order to increase their financial revenue and benefit local people. The result is regional protectionism that prioritizes local benefit-oriented economic development. The regions compete with each other in pursuing their interests, thereby consolidating the larger structure in which the interests of local bureaucrats and local businessmen coincide.

Local protectionism and WTO accession

“In a country without a united market”, stated an executive working for a foreign-invested automobile company in Shanghai, “the biggest headache is to sell our products from one city to another.” The company’s cars sell well in the south, but are barred from entry in some northern markets. Envious of the company’s substantial investments in the south, and fearing the threat its entry would pose to local automobile makers, officials refused to grant license plates to cars the company tries to sell in the north.

As regional protectionism results in more tax revenue being retained at the local level, the central government has experienced shortfalls. Furthermore, regional protectionism has led to the fragmentation of larger markets and the atomisation of local markets, which goes against the WTO rules. In order to lure foreign investment, China has offered preferential measures for regions and types of investors; concessions have been offered in enterprise income tax and import tariffs. The principle of international treatment, however, dictates that FIEs (foreign investment enterprises) should neither be discriminated against nor treated favourably. To honour its commitments to the WTO, China must adopt unified policies for the whole nation and must not favour one region or enterprise over another.

Regional protectionism – by protecting the backward, inflating trade costs, blocking the equitable allocation of resources, and hindering the formation of large-scale economies – is becoming the main cause for the weakening international competitiveness of Chinese enterprises. The Chinese government is increasingly aware of these problems, as two final examples show.

At the 2004 China Mayor Forum, the mayor of Fuzhou announced a bold policy to help foreign companies sell their goods in the city, regardless of where they locate their headquarters. Chongqing, the largest industrial city in the West, decided early in 2002 to abolish its time-honoured policy of levying additional fees on the sales of cars traded in other provinces. Although this decision will result in Chongqing losing tens of millions of yuan, it would, according to Chongqing’s vice mayor, force local automakers to learn how to compete: “It is a live-or-die question. The mission is not easy, but we have no choice.”

References


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Note

Countering Purism

The Revitalization of Moluccan Languages

In minority indigenous communities where languages are endangered, people are adopting more dominant or prestigious languages, introduced through colonization, trade, and evangelization, as a national language, or as a language of wider communication. Among the remaining speakers of the endangered language, levels of fluency vary considerably, knowledge and use diminish among younger speakers, linguists commonly observe widespread grammatical restructuring and the emergence of new varieties. These processes may lead to a “language shift cycle”.

T

he language shift cycle begins with extensive variation flourishing in the endangered language. Variation is evident in the lexicon, with greater use of loanwords from the encroaching lan- guage. More significant is the gram- matical restructuring which common- ly accompanies language shift. Speakers of various ages and levels of fluency reanalyse the grammatical fea- tures of the indigenous language in dif- ferent ways, resulting in different gram- mars of the language existing side-by-side in one community. Such lexical and grammatical variation com- monly triggers reactions among older people who wish to maintain a ‘pure’ or more conservative form of the lan- guage. These puristic attitudes may result in older fluent speakers restricting their use of the language with non- fluent speakers. Decreased transmis- sion and lack of access to a fluent speaker model lead to imperfect learn- ing among younger speakers, which then gives rise to greater variation. And so begins a cycle in which the drive for purism is itself implicated in language obsolescence.

The challenge for linguists wishing to respond to the voiced desires of com- munities to maintain or renew endan- gered languages, lies with developing tools to intervene in the language shift cycle. For a start, this means countering puristic attitudes by working with community members to increase lin- guistic tolerance and compromise. Ulti- mately, the goal is to support language revitalization by rebuilding an envi- ronment where varieties of the lan- guage are again spoken across genera- tions. An innovative training pro- gramme being developed among speakers of Moluccan languages and their descendents, both in the Dutch diaspora, hopes to meet this challenge.

A high level of linguistic diversity characterizes the 14 Central Moluccan Islands in eastern Indonesia: no less than 42 Austronesian languages are spoken in these islands. The greatest diversity is found on Seram Island with 21 extant languages and Ambon Island with six. Language endangerment in the Central Moluccan Islands is attrib- utable to a cluster of factors: a long his- tory of contact with non-indigenous peoples, colonization, intensive trade, and conversion to non-indigenous reli- gions. These factors have all con- tributed to the widespread use of the contact language Ambonese Malay. It is furthermore well documented that languages in Christian villages in Maluku are becoming obsolescent more rapidly than languages spoken in villages that have converted to Islam. In the postcolonial era, the national lan- guage, Indonesian, has impacted on the linguistic ecology through its status as the language of education, media, and government. Against this back- ground, a recent analysis of linguistic vitality among Austronesian languages (Florey forthcoming) shows that Maluku has the highest level of lan- guage endangerment in Indonesia. Six languages are known to have become extinct in recent times, and seven of the 19 seriously endangered languages have fewer than 50 speakers.

Although endangered languages are spoken by very few people in Maluku, speakers remain among Moluccan res- idents in the Netherlands. In 1950, when many Moluccans were unwilling to join the newly formed Republic of Indonesia against which they had fought, some 25,500 soldiers and their families accepted an opportunity to demobilize in the Netherlands. The vast majority of them continue to live in exile, and among the 50,000 Dutch Moluccans there may be speakers of as many as ten Central Moluccan lan- guages (Florey and Van Engelenhoven 2001).

It is within this framework of high linguistic diversity, serious endanger- ment, and poor documentation that a project is being undertaken to docu- ment four previously undescribed Cen- tral Moluccan languages. Research team members Florey, Ewing, Lita- mahuputty, and Musgrove are working in both the Indonesian homeland and in the Dutch diaspora with speakers of languages indigenous to Amahai and Soahuku villages (Seram Island), Aboru (Haruku Island), Tulehu (Ambon Island), and Analg (Ambon Island). Models for working with communi- ty members are being developed, for example, in the network of Aboriginal Language Centres in Australia, and in the Master-Apprentice scheme estab- lished by Hinton for indigenous Cali- forniaan languages (Hinton and Hale 2001). These models aim to empower communities through training pro- grammes that facilitate community ownership of language activities.

In the Netherlands, the past decade has witnessed a revival of interest in ethno-linguistic identity and bahasa tanah (indigenous languages) among second- and third-generation Dutch Moluccans. Aspirations for language use range from incorporating a few words into speech as markers of iden- tity to writing songs, poetry, and litera- ture in bahasa tanah, and in some cases, to becoming speakers of ance- stral languages. Elderly first generation Dutch Moluccans, encouraged by this interest, wish to share their residual knowledge of bahasa tanah. However, community members have been uncer- tain about how to teach and learn these languages, and have seen their efforts frustrated by a lack of materials.

The research team responded to com- munity aspirations for language aware- ness and renewal activities by offering a series of bahasa tanah workshops in three language groups: Koako (Ama- hai/Soahuku), Haruku, and Allang. An innovative training pro- gramme was developed, with the aim of providing training tools to enable trainees to work with and support language communities in the documentation of their languages. The training programme is aimed at empowering language communities to take an active role in language maintenance programs in their communities.

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Widespread linguistic variation will be encountered in communities undergo- ing rapid language shift, and trained linguists and community language workers will need tools to work with it. Thus at level 3 ‘Learning about language change’, the workshop focused on cross- linguistic comparison and, through a process of discovery, awareness devel- oped of the extent of variation in speech communities. Through 10 years of liv- ing in the Dutch diaspora, many Molu- ccan speakers and their descendents have maintained strong links to their villages of origin. Activities commonly take place within kinship groups organized around village-level communities. At the same time, the belief has persisted that Moluccan lan- guages, be it with some lexical differ- ences, are essentially the same, and that differences between Moluccan groups primarily lie in the socio-political realm.
Malaysia and Islamic Modernity

Due to its growing economic prosperity since the 1970s, Malaysia is often appreciated as a well-functioning model for economic development. As part of an ambitious encompassing modernization project, Islam, or more precisely a certain kind of Islamic vision has been firmly connected to a vision of the formation of a modern Asian society. It was by setting into operation Islam as a cultural force in service of the economy that Malaysia countered the potential disruption that results from rapid national change and paved the way for its sustained economic growth. This affinity between religion and creating modern society in Malaysia was discussed during the workshop ‘Asian Modernity and Islam: The Case of Malaysia’.

By Sigrid Nook & Georg Stauth

F ormer Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir has been one of the key players defining the relationship between modernity and Islam. In the public opening lecture of the workshop, Omar Farouk Rajjoud addressed the characteristics of Mahathirism, relating the former prime minister’s biography to the political ideology that shaped postcolonial Malaysia. In the early 1970s, Mahathir began curtailing the cultural dependency and colonial residue of the ‘Look West’ perspective. His ‘Look East’ campaign was designed to bestow recognition to the Malays and to Islam. Although he had to rely on ‘Malayness’ in shaping Malay nationalism, Mahathir stressed the need for competitiveness within global capitalism. However, he always gave way to political protection of Malay communities and Malay traditions in the economic sphere and in cultural discourse. Finally, he was a ruthless self-made man, which in a way contradict his call for the upholding of Islamic values.

Impressed by the Japanese model, which combined rapid economic growth with the preservation of tradition and communal values, Mahathir attempted to mould a coherent social ideology and a rather strict religious-political programme through a new discourse on Islam and Islamic modernity. As Mahathir’s perception of an Islamic state depended on a unique vision of the Japanese path towards capitalism, his campaigns to ‘act Islamic’ really meant to ‘act Japanese’.

Throughout the Mahathir period, culture, i.e. ‘Islam’ was seen as instrumental to economic and political needs and to plans for national development. According to Farouk, the instrumentalization of Islam in his various campaigns was restrained from within by the democratic constitution of the country on the one hand and by Islamic networks ‘looking Middle East’ on the other. Outside the nation, Mahathir’s efforts to strengthen political relations with oil-rich Muslim countries facilitated the formation of Islamic networks. As an undesired consequence, these networks ultimately achieved their own cultural and political restraints and restrained Mahathir’s instrumentalization of Islam. Furthermore, his strategic cooperation with global capitalist players contributed to contradict his Islamic values campaign and thus limited Mahathir’s authority of interventions. The beginning of Mahathirism, became an operating attitude of the majority state in a state that otherwise characterized by different angle, one could ask whether Malaysia represents the emergence of an autonomous Islamic discourse, challenging the official line. Most important, the contradiction between the state-based forms of micro-manage-ment of Islam on the one hand, and the normative Islamic discourse (which concerns how individuals perceive the world and how they position themselves in it in moral terms) could evolve into a new turn of total Islam (i.e. the reformulation of law and politics from below): a discursive condition which would escape full control by the state.

Although germs of political opposition can be found among Muslims, Malaysia today is commonly believed to be remarkably stable. From the angle of the relationship between Islam, state, and culture we can identify a productive, though tenuous, interplay between different layers of Islamic intellectualism. One may ask, if this can be sustained in the future beyond any hegemonic intervention by the state and Islam-ic intellectualism could flourish similarly in a civil society independent from state authoritarianism. Looking from a different angle, one could ask whether Malaysia represents a new model of ‘Asian Islam’. Paradoxically, while through-out Mahathir’s period Islam was tentatively instrumentalized for economic and social development campaigns (epitomized in slogans like ‘Look East’ and ‘Act Japanese’), this model is also a condition, now, of all tendencies of Islam reflecting it as a force of its own.

Dr Georg Stauth teaches sociology at the University of Bielefeld, is the director of research at the ‘Sonderforschungsbereich’ 295 ‘Cultural and Linguistic Contact and Social Change’ at the University of Mainz, and head of the above mentioned study group. He is editing the Yearbook of the Sociology of Islam (Vol. 5 is in print: ‘On Archeology of Sanhdt and Local Spirituality in Islam’).

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Dr Sigrid Nook is a fellow at the KWI in Essen and a member of the above mentioned study group. Her dissertation ‘Dr. Teichers des Gast- inshicken der Islam. Zur Entwicklung des ethnischen und kulturellen Austausches: Eine Fallstudie’ (transcript, Bielefeld 2002), was a sociological study of the everyday politics of recognition and contained case studies concerning the daughters of migratory workers and Islam. Her research interests include social theory, Muslims in Europe and European Islam.

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** Apart from Farish Noor, several others at the workshop: Claudia Derichs (Duis- burg), Helmut Lukas (Wien), Alexander Horstmann (Münster), and Bernhard Taucher (Bremen/Boaz) also emphasized the exclusivist ‘nature’ of the Mahathirist political system and its manipulations of political discourse.
Cautious Optimism

By J. Thomas Linblad

The conference theme, ‘Business in the Reformasi Era’ immediately directed attention to the pressing question of how a businessman should respond to the present reshaping of politics and economics in Indonesia. Most contributions addressed the climate for investment and economic recovery from a bird’s eye view, whereas only a few papers reflected a view at a micro level of business or from inside the individual enterprise. Special attention was given to legal reforms, privatization and, of course, corruption which has long been an important aspect of Indonesian politics and society. There is no consensus among citizens, less corruption in the legal system will enable the dispersal of debt-ridden assets now held by the Indonesian state, and in turn this will restore business confidence and thus trigger new investment.

The alarm signal was sounded early on when keynote speaker Andrew MacIntyre stated that, ‘there is one thing worse than organized corruption and that is unorganized corruption.’ The rules of the game change as politics and economics are reshaped, in particular as a consequence of the far-reaching decentralization that has taken place in Indonesia over the last decade. MacIntyre’s tune later returned in presentations of two in-depth studies of corruption. Merly Khouw had found no statistical relationship between more bribery and higher efficiency. Interestingly, 75 per cent of responding business people claimed to be against giving bribes, whereas only 15 per cent said they would refuse them. In their systematic analysis of bankruptcies since 1998, Marie-Christine Schröder and Kevin Sidharta MacIntyre, find that bribery has already crept into the implementation of the new legislation on bankruptcy. Their finding needs to be linked with the difficulty that the IBRA (Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency) reported in selling off assets seized from debt-ridden private companies. This is mainly due to the fact that it is difficult to have the original owners declared bankrupt. According to Felix Salmon, the current book value of IBRA-backed assets corresponds to a mere quarter of their original stated value when the crisis struck in 1997. Their current undervaluation clearly implies an enormous burden on the public budget in Indonesia in terms of debt servicing. In addition it offers ample opportunities for original owners to buy back their assets through straw men at fire sale prices.

The link between institutional failure and macroeconomic prospects was stressed by co-convenor Chatib Basri in his general survey of the economy. Basri noted a continuation of the current rate of economic growth, at about 3.5 per cent per year, but foresaw that much still had to be accomplished in the vein of institutional reform in order to meet a full recovery that could be staged. In his opinion, a reformulation of industrial policy should now be given highest priority. This was not taken up in the subsequent discussion, however, which focused on the repercussions that the IMF’s departure from Indonesia as of 1 January 2004 would have on the Indonesian economy.

Total private investment is slowly increasing in Indonesia but foreign direct investment has already been in decline for several years. This is a clear reason for alarm and the climate for foreign investment was a recurrent theme throughout the conference. In her general survey of the political situation, human rights activist Sidney Jones, for instance, highlighted sources of uncertainty about the near future in Indonesia today, ranging from clashes between military and police in Aceh and Papua to the ambivalence among many Indonesian Muslims about the world-wide campaign against terrorism. However, as several speakers emphasized, the foreign investment climate depends above all on attitudes and policies adopted by the Indonesian government.

Dr. J. Thomas Linblad teaches economic history at Leiden University and is an IIAS fellow presently working on the transition of the Indonesian economy between the 1930s and 1960s. He is also Islamic Southeast Asia editor for the IAS Newsletter.

Information

The ‘Indonesia Update’ is organized annually by the Indonesia Project of the Research School of Asian and Pacific Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra. The first ‘Update’ took place in 1982. The twenty-first one, in 2003, had as its theme ‘Business in the Reformasi Era: New Challenges, Old Problems’ and drew an unprecedented large crowd. It was jointly convened by the economic historian Pierre van der Eng (ANU) and the economist Chatib Basri (University of Indonesia, Jakarta). A publication of the proceedings is expected early in 2004. Next year’s ‘Update’ will be held in early 2005.

Religious Networks Between the Middle East and Southeast Asia

By Michael Feener

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the study of diaspora, overseas communities, and transnational networks among scholars working in a number of fields. Connections and relationships between the Middle East and Southeast Asia have existed for many centuries. Studying the historical and contemporary relationships between these two important areas of the Muslim world calls for contributions from a wide variety of perspectives, ranging from the historical and anthropological to the political and philosophical.

By Michael Feener

Transregional Islamic networks and issues related to them were discussed at the IIAS workshop “Religious Networks between the Middle East and Southeast Asia”, precisely with such multidisciplinarity in mind. The topics addressed included the migration and diaspora, Islamic studies and translation studies, as well as Arabic and Malay publishing in both the Middle East and Southeast Asia. A number of presentations contributed insights gained from a strong focus on textual sources for the modern period of history of religious networks between the two regions. Ahmad Ibrahim Abu-Shouk discussed some of the complex dynamics among groups of Arabs in the Dutch East Indies as elaborated in a unique manuscript copy of the Java, while Jaiat Burhanuddin’s presentation outlined some of the major developments of Indonesian publishing that were influenced by increased travel and communications between Egypt and Indonesia during the early twentieth century. Textual approaches also characterized the papers presented by Nico Kaptijn on Sufi literature and Michael Feener on Hadith studies, both of which explored issues relating to evolving understandings of religious authority. These case studies also illustrated the complexity of religious networks, connected to rapidly changing and expanding networks in the modern period. The relation of such networks to the institutional history of organizations like the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdatul Ulama were also discussed by Hassan Hanafi in his presentation. Throughout the workshop, textual and historical studies of this type were complemented by others that dealt with contemporaneous events, for instance research on the intersecting historical and cultural history of Islam in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. 

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The above workshop was sponsored by the IIAS in conjunction with the Institute for Gender and Women’s Studies at the American University in Cairo (AUC), which was convened by Mona Abaza (AUC) and Nino Kaptein (Leiden University).

Information
For the Love of Tin
The VOC in Ligor

The Southern Thai province of Nakhon Si Thammarat is heir to one of the oldest port city-states of Southeast Asia. In the early days, Dutch and other European traders knew the province by the name ‘Ligor’. For more than a century, from around 1640 until 1756, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) ran a small office in the flourishing entrepôt, the collecting station for the region’s tin.

During the first three decades of the seventeenth century, the VOC had direct contact with the ruler of Ligor, annually purchasing 600-700 baht of black pepper (approximately 250,000 pounds; 1 baht = 235 pounds). In the best of years, the purchase could be up to 1,000-1,200 baht (375,000-450,000 pounds). In 1612 the Company concluded a contract with King Narai of Ayutthaya. These exclusive rights allowed it to secure quotas for export and purchase tin in Ligor at less than ‘market’ prices. These preferential trading rights were, however, not absolute. VOC officers in Ayutthaya and Ligor had to be loyalists. The Dutch Company managed to obtain exclusive rights in 1660 by concluding a contract with King Narai of Ayutthaya. These exclusive rights allowed it to secure quotas for export and purchase tin in Ligor at less than ‘market’ prices. These preferential trading rights were, however, not absolute. VOC officers in Ayutthaya and Ligor had to be loyalists. The Dutch Company managed to obtain exclusive rights in 1660 by concluding a contract with King Narai of Ayutthaya. These exclusive rights allowed it to secure quotas for export and purchase tin in Ligor at less than ‘market’ prices. These preferential trading rights were, however, not absolute. VOC officers in Ayutthaya and Ligor had to be loyalists. The Dutch Company managed to obtain exclusive rights in 1660 by concluding a contract with King Narai of Ayutthaya. These exclusive rights allowed it to secure quotas for export and purchase tin in Ligor at less than ‘market’ prices. These preferential trading rights were, however, not absolute. VOC officers in Ayutthaya and Ligor had to be loyalists. The Dutch Company managed to obtain exclusive rights in 1660 by concluding a contract with King Narai of Ayutthaya. These exclusive rights allowed it to secure quotas for export and purchase tin in Ligor at less than ‘market’ prices. These preferential trading rights were, however, not absolute. VOC officers in Ayutthaya and Ligor had to be loyalists. The Dutch Company managed to obtain exclusive rights in 1660 by concluding a contract with King Narai of Ayutthaya. These exclusive rights allowed it to secure quotas for export and purchase tin in Ligor at less than ‘market’ prices. These preferential trading rights were, however, not absolute. VOC officers in Ayutthaya and Ligor had to be loyalists. The Dutch Company managed to obtain exclusive rights in 1660 by concluding a contract with King Narai of Ayutthaya. These exclusive rights allowed it to secure quotas for export and purchase tin in Ligor at less than ‘market’ prices. These preferential trading rights were, however, not absolute. VOC officers in Ayutthaya and Ligor had to be loyalists. The Dutch Company managed to obtain exclusive rights in 1660 by concluding a contract with King Narai of Ayutthaya. These exclusive rights allowed it to secure quotas for export and purchase tin in Ligor at less than ‘market’ prices. These preferential trading rights were, however, not absolute. VOC officers in Ayutthaya and Ligor had to be loyalists.

The honeymoon period between Ligor and the VOC ended in the 1650s. Behind this was a temporary but sharp decline in the European demand for pepper and the outbreak of war between King Prasatthong of Siam and his vassal states on the Peninsula, which refused to recognize his legitimacy on the Siamese throne. According to the Dutch records, the Company sided with Siam, cautiously providing military aid to King Prasatthong. Ligor and the other Thai-Malay vassal states were eventually subdued and severely punished. The Dutch records also describe how Ligor was completely destroyed. The plantation was demolished and the ‘king’ and his wife, trapped in their ammunition-laden palace, died when the palace was blown up. The political situation changed with the dismemberment of Nakhon Si Thammarat. The provinces of ‘Borde-long’ (Phatthalung), Sangora (Songkhla) and Tsjaija (Chaiya) were henceforth ruled by governors and other high-ranking officers sent directly from the capital. The victory of Ayutthaya over Ligor in 1654 was thus a historical turning point, leading to a more complicated triangular relationship between Siam, Ligor, and the VOC. It also opened new trading opportunities for the Company.

Tin in Ligor was known to be very pure and of high quality. Tin production is estimated to have been 700,000 baht (248,000-354,000 pounds) per annum in the mid-seventeenth century. The Company expected to secure at least 400 baht of tin per year. This target, however, could not be realized without the help of a seal of approval to trade tin in Ligor, and without Ayutthaya’s support. The Dutch Company managed to obtain exclusive rights in 1660 by concluding a contract with King Narai of Ayutthaya. These exclusive rights allowed it to secure quotas for export and purchase tin in Ligor at less than ‘market’ prices. These preferential trading rights were, however, not absolute. VOC officers in Ayutthaya and Ligor had to be loyalists.

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The Flying Circus and other forms, social dance, and ritual in a Khon workshop. Students and professional actor-dancers.

One of his recent projects on Cambodian court dance and drama resulted in a Khon workshop — professional actor-dancers. Some performers are educating themselves on rural migrants’ urban concerns to better relate to their audiences. The Café now stands at a crossroads. Will it transform into an urban venue? Or will it disappear? Some are as adept in performing folkloric comic turns as in discoursing on critical theory. Tradition-based contemporary performance is a particularly critical cultural intervention in Malaysia, where government and religious authorities have colluded to end old patterns of sponsorship for wayang kulit, social dance, and ritual drama.

**Border crossings**

A number of papers and presentations explored the historical and contemporary dimensions of Southeast Asia as a lively crossroads where global artistic practices inter-articulate in exciting and often surprising ways. Southeast Asia’s shadow puppet theatres have long ignored what Ghulam-Sarwar Yusof called “the often artificial boundaries between nations”, with performers and puppets travelling overseas for economic, religious, and political ends. As I discussed in my own paper, popular theatre in the Indonesian archipelago has seen the active participation of artists from India, China, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and many other countries for hundreds of years. Singapore’s Chinese Opera Institute, under Chua Soo Pong’s direction, not only teaches and performs staples of the Teochew operatic repertoire; it has also reinterpreted ‘The Golden Deer’ episode of the Ramayana as bilingual Chinese opera. As Pawit Mahasarinand demonstrated, twentieth-century European and American spoken drama in Thai translation has provided a mode for exploring subjects customarily considered taboo in Thai society.

Many issues brought up at the seminar-workshop demand further exploration, including the reinvention of tradition, the politics and aesthetics of Southeast Asian intercultural theatre, and other legal issues involved in the consumption of artistic property across national borders. Virtual and real routes connect the theatres of insular and mainland Southeast Asia. Some are new, others old. The theatre of Southeast Asia will continue to live as long as it flows across borders, representing the past and imagining the future.

Ken Sen be seen within a history of Singaporean Chinese cultural brokers and impresarios, or does his work demand appreciation according to non-local standards? Zuilikfi Bin Mohammad presented a possible solution to some classification problems in his discussion of the political economy of Malaysian performance. A new mode of practice is emerging in Southeast Asia, which Zuilikfi calls ‘tradition-based contemporary dance and theatre’. Artists from both traditional and modern backgrounds are reinterpreting time-honoured disciplines as the basis for new performances, accessible to non-traditional audiences in national and international venues. Tradition is not merely appropriated by these practitioners, but is transformed in the process. Traditional and new audiences equally appreciate many of these artists. Some are as adept in performing folkloric comic turns as in discoursing on critical theory. Tradition-based contemporary performance is a particularly critical cultural intervention in Malaysia, where government and religious authorities have colluded to end old patterns of sponsorship for wayang kulit, social dance, and ritual drama.

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Information

The seminar and workshop on Southeast Asian Performing Arts, organized by the Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA) and Bangkok University, brought together Southeast Asian academics and practitioners of drama, dance, and puppetry, and Thai theatre professionals, young and old, to discuss, act out, and evaluate issues engaging theatre in Southeast Asia today. Publication of the proceedings of the seminar in both English and Thai is anticipated.
This article will mostly delve into the theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches of myth as discussed in the first section of the conference. First, however, I will touch upon the second part dealing with in-depth area studies. In their area studies Cosimo Zene and Elizabeth Gunner reconstructed the marginality and power tension as expressed in the mythical narrative of the Indian low-caste Dalit and in the mythical figure of the Zulu goddess Nomkaubulwana respectively. In turn, YE Shuxian presented a fascinating reconstruction of the old Chinese goddess worship, based not only on the meaning, but also on the outer shape of Chinese characters. The varied nature of these area studies is the living proof of the complex relationship between theory and empirical data. Be it as it may that comparative research gives us interesting insights into what people all over the world share, there are several possible dangers in constructing general theories on the basis of large corpuses of texts. Details of the individual myths may disappear, or too much attention may be paid to similarities as a result of which differences may be overlooked; it is also possible that focusing on the overall structures of myths causes a neglect of philological aspects.

The eternal problem of definitions reappeared at various moments during the conference and in the final debate chaired by Reimark Scheffold, Mark Geller, and BoudewijnWalraven. A crucial question is, whether it is possible to use general concepts thought up in one culture and apply them to local contexts of other cultures. The concept of myth itself is a Western construction based on especially Classical Greek – mythology. It would be wrong to take for granted that this and other concepts are universal. Sometimes Western scholars would call a certain story ‘myth’, whereas the society in which the story is told uses another name or does not have an equivalent for the Western word ‘myth’ at all. If this is so, then what is the sense of using general concepts such as ‘myth’ and ‘mythology’? To what extend can we do without definitions? Should we reconsider the existing definitions, taking into account the terms and practices found in non-Western societies? Such questions show the importance of an ongoing dialogue between theoretical work, intercultural approaches, and in-depth area studies.

Killing myths

But even if myth can be applied outside of the West, there also exists an ongoing tension between myth on the one hand and science in general on the other. Is it possible at all to have a science of myth? One aspect of myth, usually taken for granted in general approaches, is that the society in which a myth is told, ascribes some kind of truth to the text, but that the analyst considered this to be untrue. This means that by acknowledging that a certain narrative is a myth, it ceases to be a myth, because it is no longer considered to be true. In the end, this even entails the question whether mythology as a concept actually exists outside Hegemonic North Atlantic science. As a countermeasure against the rupture between the study of myth on the one hand and the narration of myth on the other, ‘fusion’ has been suggested (Wim van Binsbergen). By becoming part of the living environment in which a myth is told, the researcher will no longer be an outsider who reads the text literally and kills the myth in the process. Instead, as an insider, he will come to see myth as, for example, narrative playing an important role in the construction of identity in the society concerned. On the other hand, one could argue that being an outsider is not necessarily negative and has even certain advantages (Bakhtin 1986:7). The modern myth

Myth is in a difficult relationship not merely to science but to our society. On the one hand, science has been suggested (Wim van Binsbergen). By becoming part of the living environment in which a myth is told, the researcher will no longer be an outsider who reads the text literally and kills the myth in the process. Instead, as an insider, he will come to see myth as, for example, narrative playing an important role in the construction of identity in the society concerned. On the other hand, one could argue that being an outsider is not necessarily negative and has even certain advantages (Bakhtin 1986:7).

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The Emergence of a National Economy

Written for non-economists, this textbook on the economic history of Indonesia fills a considerable gap in the literature. Collectedly authored by a group of distinguished historians, its sections on currency, industry, labour costs, and maritime trade are much more stimulating than one might expect from an ordinary textbook. Students will undoubtedly welcome its publication.

By William G. Clarence-Smith

The authors stress the political backdrop to economic phenomena, and present as their guiding theme the emergence and consolidation of an Indonesian ‘national economy’. Howard Dick insists that the aim is not to supply a ‘meta-narrative’, but a ‘consistent perspective’. This is somewhat disingenuous, as the story of the birth and development of the Indonesian state almost inevitably becomes a structuring idea in any account. Indeed, the authors stress the late centralization of the state, but this makes early parts of the text read even more like Hamlet without the prince. Practical problems result, as the Malay peninsula and northern Borneo, arbitrarily hacked away by colonial partition, remain indissolubly linked to the Indonesian state. In particular, the role of Singapore as the real economic capital of the region surfaces again and again through the book.

Dick emphasizes the political backdrops to economic phenomena, and presents as their guiding theme the emergence and consolidation of an Indonesian ‘national economy’. The Emergence of a National Economy is almost nothing on breeding and selling livestock, even though buffaloes, cattle, and horses ploughed and trimmed fields, pulled carts, carried packs, drew coaches, and powered new urban transport systems. ‘Foreign Orientals’ are all too often reduced to ‘Chinese’, with none of Peter Post’s subtle distinctions between different South Chinese diasporas. There is likewise too little coverage of the involvement of Japanese, Hadhrami and Syrian Arabs, Indians of all types, and Armenians.

Given that Indonesia contains the largest number of Muslims in the world, the most unfortunate absence is that of Islam. Symptomatic of this bias is Howard Dick’s failure to even mention the Darul Islam guerrillas after 1948. Alternative Islamic approaches to politics and economics, such as banking and state structures, do not figure, and there is no sense of how Islam may have promoted or retarded economic development for Ahmad Hasan of Persis, himself brought up in Singapore by a Tamil Muslim father, the emerging Indonesian nation of the 1920s was quite similar, yet he does question Reid’s inflated urban figures in an appendix. Houben is on more familiar ground when treating nineteenth-century Java, though a conclusion is drawn too quickly, and Western plantation economies were hardly models of efficiency.

Thomas Lindblad tackles the ‘Outer Islands’ in the nineteenth century, and the whole colony up to the Great Depression. The first of these topics is not his specialty. Unaware of the Hadhrami Arab dominance of inter-island shipping, he fails to cite the late Frank Broeze’s pioneering article, and all too readily swallows Campo’s rose-colored views on the role of the KPM (Koninklijke Pakketvaart Maatschappij) steamship monopoly. He skates over the forced cultivation of coffee in West Sumatra and North Sulawesi, incorrectly alleging that individual Indonesians did not gain from it. While Lindblad is on firmer ground in the latter chapter, he, like Houben, overstates the efficacy of the ‘modern’ sector.

Howard Dick notes that GDP per head at constant prices peaked in 1929 and 1941, and attained similar levels again only in the mid-1970s. To be sure, the twin disasters of the Japanese invasion and ill-judged Dutch attempts at reconquest were partly responsible, but Dick’s attempts to salvage progressive features from the period 1950-57 carry little conviction. Even before 1957, Indonesia missed out on a period of extraordinary growth in the world economy, probably witnessing a decline in the share of manufacturing in GDP. Sukarno’s closure of the country indeed led to ‘wasted years’.

In contrast, the thirty years’ climb in real GDP per head from 1967 to 1997 appears impressive. It goes a long way to explain why Indonesians put up with Suharto’s dictatorship for so long, and why some remain nostalgic for those heady decades. THEE Kian-Wie, however, rightly stresses the growing protestations and corruption that followed the retirement of the first generation of economic technocrats. This prepared the way for the 1997 collapse, which was more than a merely conjunctural crisis. Writing in 2001, there was little hope for the potential impact of the new regime’s decentralization, though so far it has turned out better than many expected.

Certain themes are treated too light-ly in the book, partly reflecting weaknesses in the existing literature. There is almost nothing on breeding and selling livestock, even though buffaloes, cattle, and horses ploughed and trimmed fields, pulled carts, carried packs, drew coaches, and powered new urban transport systems. ‘Foreign Orientals’ are all too often reduced to ‘Chinese’, with none of Peter Post’s subtle distinctions between different South Chinese diasporas. There is likewise too little coverage of the involvement of Japanese, Hadhrami and Syrian Arabs, Indians of all types, and Armenians.

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The decision to leave controversial themes out of the book fills a definite gap in the literature, and will undoubtedly be of great utility to students and teachers alike.


Professor William G. Clarence-Smith is professor of the Economic History of Asia and Africa at the School of Oriental and African Studies. His current research concerns the history of livestock and Islamic attitudes towards slavery in Southeast Asia.

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Recalling Malaya’s Communist Menace: Fact and Fiction on Chin Peng

By Andrew Symon

Chin Peng co-authored his story with Singapore-based writers and publishers Ian Ward, who was formerly the Southeast Asia correspondent for the London Daily Telegraph, and Ward’s wife Norma Miraflor. One of the last of the region’s old revolutionaries, Chin Peng still lives in southern Thailand, now aged 79. Back in the 1940s and 1950s, Chin Peng, secretary of the Communist Party of Malaya, and his followers, mostly ethnic Chinese, were painted as bloodthirsty communist terrorists, alien revolutionaries directed by the Soviet Union and China who were unrepresentative of the local communities.

In the early 1950s, at the height of what was called the ‘Emergency’, which ran from 1948-1960, there were a hundred thousand soldiers and police hunting several thousand communist fighters in the Malayian jungles and a reward of Malayan dollars for each communist captured. The London Daily Mail described Chin Peng in 1955 as a man ‘notorious for his ruthless and calculated ferocity’ (quoting from Chin Peng 2003:68). He had spread ‘death, destruction, and misery in a vain attempt to gain political power by force of arms’. Yet Chin Peng, or Ong Boon Hua, argues that the British stereotyped them in this way to justify the British presence in Malaya. Ultimately though, their threat, he argues, finally forced the British to grant independence to Malaya in 1957, as the price for Malay and moderate local Chinese support against the communists, and against guarantees that British strategic and commercial interests would continue to be protected. ‘The declassified documents of the Emergency years prove how the British manipulated language and information lest the rest of the world got to believe the Communist Party of Malaya was a legitimate national-ist group seeking the end of colonialism’ (p.513).

In 1954, the commissioner general of the United Kingdom in Southeast Asia, Malcolm McDonald, advised the foreign office in London that ‘no one can be allowed to depict the Malayan war as a spontaneous nationalist uprising’. (p.174). Rather, Britain should ‘affirm that the Malayan insurgents are primarily an alien force acting under alien instructions.’ In fact, Chin Peng says there was no assistance or orders from Beijing or Moscow at the height. A key fighting in the 1940s and 1950s. However, after 1961, there was Chinese policy direction and financial support for the remnants of the guerrilla groups, whose numbers and vigour were briefly renewed in the early and mid-1970s. A thousand or so continued to fight sporadically from southern Thailand until a peace accord was finally reached in 1989, brokered by the Malaysian and Thai prime ministers, Mahathir Mohammad and Chavalit Youngchaiyudh.

A sense of emergency

Chin Peng says in his memoirs that his concern was always for Malaya. He was attracted to communism through the writings of Mao Zedong in response to what he saw as exploitative, often heavy-handed British rule. To illustrate this, he points to the fact that workers, originally brought from the subcontinent to work on rubber plantations, were deported back to India in the 1930s when the Depression made their labour no longer profitable for planters. Communist party members also faced banishment from Malaya. For Malayan Chinese sent to China before Mao came to power in 1949, this meant, Chin Peng says, death or prison by the Kuomintang nationalist government. By the early 1960s, there were 20,000 banished Malayan Chinese communists and their families in China.

His recollection of an arrogant and racist colonial regime clashes with the common picture, at least in the West, of the British in Malaya as essentially decent and generally benefi- cial, if somewhat eccentric rulers, inclined to play out in the noonday sun.

Chin Peng says his later resistance to British colonialism, as a teenager Chin Peng decided to fight against the Japanese from the jungles along with other communists, in alliance with the British. As a result, one British officer charac- terized him as courageous, reliable, and likable. In 1946, Lord Louis Mountbatten awarded him campaign medals in recognition of his contribution and in 1947 he would have been awarded an Order of the British Empire if it were not for the fact that the Malaysian Communist Party decided to pursue armed revolution.

During this armed revolution, claims Chin Peng, neither the party central committee nor the politburo ever adopted a policy of armed struggle. Instead, they were unaware of and authorized excesses committed by communist guerrillas, but not to the extent reported by the authorities. However, he does argue the British planters were legitimate targets, with their histories of exploiting workers and hiring thugs to break up strikes on their plantations. ‘In post-war Malaya they were armed; they surrounded themselves with paid thugs; they drove in armoured cars.’

The British themselves, he writes, were guilty of using ‘terror’ tactics to retain their hold on Malaya. ‘To contain the Emergency, the British burned villages, cut roads, and shot civilians’ so as to break links of support to the guerrilla camps in the jungles (p.21). A peace could have been achieved as early as 1955, he says, if the British and then leaders of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman and Singapore’s David Mar- shall, had not demanded that the communist fighters capit- ulate and surrender but, rather, had allowed them to hand over or destroy their weapons in an agreed way and then resume normal life with normal political freedoms which was broadly the outcome of the 1969 accords. However, in the 1970s, there was a dominant fear that this would result in the re-emergence of a radical and destabilizing leftist organization, given that the guerrillas were still young or just about middle-aged men and women. A decade and a half later Chin Peng was still portrayed as a threat. Writing in The War of the Running Dogs, published in 1971, Noel Barber said, ‘Chin Peng still lurks north of the border, taking refuge not only in neutrality but in the thought that if Mao Zedong had to wait thirty years in the “Chinese Jungle” before achieving victory, he can do the same...’

Today, Chin Peng wants to spend the last years of his life in Malaysia; a request that has so far been refused by the Malaysian government. He is now a stateless alien granted residency by the Thai government. The strong sales of the book in Singapore and Malaysia – 17,000 in the two months after its launch in September – and direct feedback to Ward shows there still remains a great deal of respect and admi- ration for Chin Peng and his convictions, despite the way he and his followers had been portrayed in earlier days. Chin Peng now describes himself as a socialist who eschews vio- lence. Times have changed. But, he says, in his youth, he had to be a liberation fighter... If you had lived in a Malayan rural population centre and observed how dismissive the British colonial were of our lot in the 1950s, you would find it easi- er to understand how the attraction of a Communist Party of Malaysia could take hold’ (p.910). Which suggests that care- ful study of the reasons for the today’s attraction of extrem- ist Islam in the region – and how this might be reduced – is as vital to police measures to prevent terrorist acts."

Recalling Malaya’s Communist Menace: Fact and Fiction on Chin Peng

By Andrew Symon

In Pursuit of Chin Peng

Author Ian Ward’s quest for Chin Peng’s story began more than three decades ago. It first led not to the general secretary of the Communist Party of Malaya, but to the writer’s capture at gunpoint by guerrillas in north-west Malaysia. In 1972, the Singa- pore-based Southeast Asia correspondent for the London Daily Telegraph, Ward had set out driving in the Sungai Siput area north of the town of Ipoh hoping to be able to find a way to Chin Peng, who was assumed to be somewhere in the jungle across the border in Thailand, while he was in fact in Beijing. A small band of guerrillas pulled Ward over, took him to a cemetery, took his money and car, and left him there bound with wire.

It was another 30 years before the pursuit met with success. Ward and his wife Norma Miraflor managed to meet Chin Peng as a result of help from the late profes- sor Michael Leifer of the London School of Economics. Through Leifer, they were able to contact a relative of Chin Peng living outside of the region, who was able to arrange a meeting with him in southern Thailand in late 2000. After several more visits, trust was established. Then followed more than 50 meetings in southern Thailand, during which his story was tape-recorded, and earlier transcriptions corrected. Ward and Miraflor also made visits to archives in the United Kingdom and Australia, where official papers of the time were copied and collected to provide documented support for Chin Peng’s history along with those from his own archives.

Ward, a one-time war correspondent, covering stories from Vietnam to Bangladesh, says that while he has always been deeply suspicious of official lines and proparan- da, the project opened his mind to the communist position half a century ago. ‘I now believe that if I had been a working class Chinese in the 1930s, I would certainly have been at least sympathetic to the Communist Party of Malaya. I can understand why they were motivated them. The world doesn’t yet appreciate how appalling colonialism could be.’ Ward says that, today, the communists should be more correctly seen as nation- alists rather than simply Chinese extremists as painted by the British. According to Ward, Chin Peng was a communist ideologue in those days. ‘But he was not person- ally a brutal man. He could be a tough leader, but not a cruel leader, not vicious.’

The reception of the book by British and Australian military veterans is mixed. Some are calling on the book to be boycotted, saying that no money should go to Chin Peng through the book’s sales. Ward says all funds entitled to Chin Peng are going at his request to a foundation for care of some 200 aged and disabled former guerrillas now living in four villages in southern Thailand. Other veterans have welcomed the book as shedding new light on the events of the times. 

Andrew Symon is a Singapore-based journalist who has worked for the Straits Times and the South China Morning Post, from Australia, he writes on polit- ical, economic, and business matters for publications within the region and in the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia. andrew.symon@pacific.net.sg
Min Yŏng-hwan: A Political Biography

Famous during his lifetime, Min Yŏng-hwan (1861–1905) is most remembered in Korean historiography for his death. A former diplomat, Min found it difficult to stomach the forced handover of Korea’s foreign relations to Japan in 1905. Along with many other courtiers, he tried in vain to put pressure on Emperor Kojong to take action against this unlawful protectorate treaty, forced upon the Korean government by the Japanese envoy Itō Hirobumi. Realizing the inappropriateness of sending memorials to the throne, Min opted for more forceful action, and committed suicide in protest of the treaty.

By Koen De Ceuster

This biography is the first book-length study in a Western language of this icon of Korean resistance to Japanese encroachment. Contrary to what one might expect, Michael Finch does not concentrate on Min’s suicide, but rather on his political career in the run-up to his suicide. He justifies this choice by referring to the existing distortion in standard political histories of pre-annexation Korea in favour of radical reform factions. Considered to run against the tide of the times, conservative reformers have consistently been underrepresented in scholarly research.

The standard reading of Korea’s pre-annexation political history roughly discerns three contesting political forces. Most research interest has gone to the progressive reformers, who during the annexation political history roughly division three: the conservatives, the radicals, and the reformers. Min Yŏng-hwan was himself a member of the latter group, and his political career in the late 19th century was marked by a constant struggle against the imperial encroachment.

In this biography, Finch demonstrates how an overly rigid application of this standard interpretation fails to do justice to the political stance of individual actors who were not hampered by any apparently impermeable, political boundaries. Min Yŏng-hwan admitted that he was a supporter of domestic change. However, he was not a member of the contemporary Yi Wan-yong, portrayed in traditional Korean historiography as the arch-traitor, his upbringing and social background made him stop short of radical institutional changes. Instead, he was a trade, not revolution. His motivation, above all, was a deeply ingrained loyalty to the monarch.

Though commendable for putting the spotlight on this forgotten politician and diplomat, and interesting for Finch’s depiction of how Min’s reform ideas changed following his exposure to Russia, the United States, and Europe in the cause of his diplomatic missions, this monograph suffers from a number of weaknesses. Admittedly, the subject himself, Min Yŏng-hwan, does not make things easy on any biographer. Min did not leave many documents behind. He never kept a diary from which one could have glimpsed his personal musings on the political peripeties of his day. As it is, this biography is a thorough analysis of the Min Ch’anggukgoong, a compilation of Min Yŏng-hwan’s memoirs addressed to the throne between 1877 and 1905, a long political essay written around the time of the Tonghak rebellion (1894), two dull and dry ‘diaries’ of his diplomatic missions to the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II (1896) and to the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Queen Victoria in London (June 1897), and a compilation of various writings about Min in the aftermath of his suicide. The two diaries consist of hardly more than agenda entries, listing who he had met, but utterly silent on the content of the discussions, let alone on his own thoughts.

Given the scarcity of materials related to Min Yŏng-hwan, Michael Finch has succeeded in painting a credible picture of this unfortunate diplomat. Regrettably, the packaging is not very appealing: Finch has produced a dissertation rather than a book. He goes out of his way to show he knows the tricks of the trade of a professional historian, debating the dating and authorship of documents, and corroborating details with collateral evidence. All attention is focused on the 1875 compilation of documents that we see Min Yŏng-hwan clearly – albeit in a not very lively fashion – but the historical background remains rather vague.

Only documents authored by Min himself attract the author’s research zeal. Once Min stops writing, Finch’s interest petered out. When he turns to the posthumous accounts in the compilation, he is disinterested in showing who wrote these documents, and offers only a sketchy analysis of the texts. So, do not expect a climax at the end. Min’s suicide is treated as just another episode of his life, seemingly unrelated, but certainly unplanned. In fact, after reading this biography, you are none the wiser as to why someone like Min Yŏng-hwan eventually took his own life in protest at the signing of the protectorate treaty. Despite having an eminently political motivation, Min’s suicide is not treated as an integral part of this political biography.

Regardless of this unfortunate finale, this book does serve an important purpose in reminding us that we have been too gullible in imposing our own political preference for radical reform when analysing pre-colonial Korean history. Michael Finch has made a relevant contribution to getting the historical balance more even.


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From Négritude to Coolitude

C oolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora aims to conceptualize the nineteenth-century dissemination of Indian labour in new and productive ways. Coolitude is a politically and intellectually ambitious book, and those with no knowledge of postcolonial history will find it a challenging read, especially as there is no index to aid navigation of its complex ideas. Paralleling the ideas of ‘Nègritude’ and Coolitude pioneered by African and Caribbean intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s, this book deploys the concept of ‘coolitude’ to describe and encapsulate the distinctive characteristics of the streams of indentured Indian migrants that shaped modern nations such as Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana, Fiji, and influenced others like Guadeloupe, Martinique, East and South Africa. In doing so, it emphasizes their shared history.

Marina Carter is perhaps the best-known historian of indentured immigrants in Mauritius, and has long wrestled with the epistemological problems of subaltern invisibility. Khal Torabully, descendant of a Lascar community (of Indian Ocean seafarers), is an acclaimed poet and film-maker based in France. The result of their collaboration is a collection of many previously unpublished texts, poems, and sketches that explore Indian plantation experiences and deconstruct traditional depictions of indentured labourers across the British Empire.

Given its authorship, it is perhaps no surprise that Coolitude is a fundamentally postmodern work. It combines empirical research with artistic immersion into what Carter and Torabully describe as ‘the world of the vanished coolie’. The authors deconstruct representations of indentured labourers, seeking to move beyond both contemporary notions and historical reappraisals of their socio-economic ‘otherness’. Historical imaginings of the experiences of indentured labourers are thus central to their efforts to redefine and re-appropriate the ways in which indentured immigrants coped with life on the plantation and produced meaningful forms of self and collective identity. Towards these ends, the authors explore the distortions and the hopelessness of the archives and early colonial literature, and assess the work of contemporary writers like V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie.

In this imaginative redenfinition of the experiences of indentured labourers, the voyage across the sea (kala pani, or ‘black water’) is given special significance. It is described as a decisive experience that left an indelible stamp on the ‘landscape’ of coolitude, a place for the destruction and creation of identities. Moreover, the authors argue, this sea voyage encapsulates the essence of all migratory journeys, and the struggles, disappointments, and hopes of the coolie are those of unification experience. In their evaluation of life on the plantation, Carter and Torabully go on to untangle the ways in which indentured migrants were ‘three victimized’: by nineteenth-century contemporaries who described them as pariahs among free men, by early literary accounts which rendered them exotic, and by historians who regard them as little more than slaves. By contrast, the authors explore ways in which Indians attempted to resist conditions on the plantation. These themes will be familiar to those who know the authors’ earlier work, particularly Carter’s nuanced reimaginings of the collective histories of Indigenous peoples and their experiences of displacement and resistance.


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Dr Clare Anderson is senior lecturer in the School of Historical Studies, University of Leicester. Her work and publications are on nineteenth-century incarceration and convict transportation across South Asia and the Indian Ocean. She currently holds a three-year Economic and Social Research Council research fellowship for the project British Penal Settlements in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, 1757-1860. ca26@le.ac.uk

Speaking Peace
Women’s Voices from Kashmir

Kashmir has followed a model of ‘development’ that has bred a generation of children who ask for AK 47 guns as birthday gifts. This is but the logical fall-out of the military presence and a level of violence that has already claimed some 70,000 lives, left 4,000 missing and a million displaced, and bequeathed a ‘widow population’ of more than 15,000. Speaking Peace: Women’s Voices from Kashmir is a collection of essays depicting the world and the lives of the women of Kashmir, torn apart by politics, militancy, and war-like violence.

Lack of proper health care, education, irrigation, and industry: the legacy of Partition, human rights violations, displacement, and resurgent conflict, these are among the daunting problems that plague the state of Jammu and Kashmir, to which Urvashi Butalia draws attention in her introduction. The essays of this book illustrate the way violence has disrupted the lives of common people and affected women, irrespective of their religious identities. Pamela Bhagat’s essay focuses on women’s health issues in the Kargil district. For women who face under-nourishment at home and have to depend on health care systems in the Kargil district hospital, without women doctors until 1984), the dividing line between life and death can be razor thin. As stated by a female doctor, pregnancies are the most serious health problem faced by women. The lack of basic knowledge on natural/post-natal care and family planning methods leads to multiple pregnancies, misery, and even death for a large number of rural women. Sabha Husain’s chapter complements Bhagat’s essay by focusing on the way personal traumas have impacted upon women. Interviewing doctors and patients at two government psychiatric hospitals in Srinagar, she chronicles cases of depression, sleep and anxiety disorders, and heart-related problems. Despite the increase in the number of patients from 1,700 in 1971 to 12,000 in 1999, the number of psychiatrists in the hospital (five) has hardly increased. Neeta Nathoo’s chapter discusses the women’s college (Government College) set up in 1950. She examines the shifting profile of the institution where she studied and, later on, taught. The built-in structure of discrimination ensured that before 1990 even very talented women were barred from higher education. Mattoo recounts the sheer vibrancy of the institution and how religious discrimination ended in 1990. After 1990, grenades, bombs, and religious extremism/fundamentalism frightened away many female students.

An extract from Krishna Mehta’s ‘This happened in Kashmir’ recounts the brutalities that visited Kashmiri women during the 1947 Partition: Shakti Bhasin’s chapter on Kashmir’s women in 1950-99 continues on this theme, focusing on the ‘second partition’ of Kashmir that led Non-Muslims, such as Kashmiri Pandits, to leave the Valley. Woven around the authors’ personal experiences, these chapters focus on forced displacement and the scars it can leave on women. Their essays also illustrate how little people learn from the past. Sonia Jahari’s chapter outlines the massacre of Sikhs at Chittisinghpura, and the brutalities that so often accompany the stigmatization of ‘others’. The chapter by Uma Chakravarty raises vital issues related to human rights violations and the way these have devastated families and traumatized those women who have survived. These brutalities raise questions about the identity of women, aspirations of a people who have been set into any region where civil society breaks down and military solutions and crisis management techniques are deployed.

A report reproduced from the Indian Express written by Muzamil [nearly recounts how the Bharatiya Janata Party grabbed hold of the government and converted it into its party headquarters after it was forced to flee Srinagar. For two years they appointed non-government officials, including the Union Minister L. Advani, but to no avail. The local party leader, the Minister of Civil Aviation, even told Krishna that were the Bharatiya Janata Party to remove its signboard from her house, it would appear as if the party had vanished from Kashmir. Such vignettes not only illustrate little-known aspects of the displacement of Kashmiri Pandits, but also reveal the real face of political parties that claim to represent ‘Indian nationalism’ in Kashmir. Taken together, the chapters of this socially engaged book comprise a laudable effort to give space to the voices of women, voices that are normally difficult to ‘hear’ and that are now further ‘violated’ by the near-war-like situation.


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Tribal Communities in the Malay World

In all area studies, studies of communities that ill fit dominant organizational forms, such as national states or world regions, have increased in importance. Research on minority groups in Southeast Asia has also blossomed in the past decade, producing a new field of cross-border, ethno-historical studies. Very few books, however, have tried to explain the development of tribal communities from a multidisciplinary, intra-regional comparative perspective. This volume, edited by Geoffrey Benjamin and Cynthia Chou, is therefore highly recommended.

The book’s unit of analysis encompasses a narrowed ‘Malay world’: South Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra, Singapore, and Sarawak, home to numerous tribal groups ranging from established peasants to sea-faring nomads. The volume addresses recent theoretical issues – internal differentiation, cultural contestation and negotiation, alternative forms of modernity beyond assimilation – and discusses them in their particular political contexts, be it the premodern kerajaan or the present-day nation state. The book consists of a 70-page theoretical introduction on tribality in the Alaman Melayu, and 18 case studies, derived from contributions by experts from Asia, the United States, and Europe to a conference held in Singapore in 1997. The state-of-the-art theoretical introduction by Geoffrey Benjamin is among the best available. In a meticulously systemic manner, it discusses the many implications of tribality, Malay-ness, and their inter-connections. ‘Tribal’ here is intended as a non-discriminatory label to characterize a particular way of life and social organization. The term should not be seen as an ethnic category but as a culturally mediated social entity within the broader state-led ‘civilizing process’. An example from Juli Edö’s contribution shows how this state influence manifested itself when the Semai, upon the Malay rulers’ request, adopted a more settled lifestyle at the beginning of the twentieth century.

But tribality is more than a social strategy. ‘Tribes’ have become sub-nuclear societies in themselves, with lifestyles distinct from the majority of peasants. The Malay world is thus argued to be a singular place, where (re)tribalization develops within a shared cultural and linguistic matrix. In this manner the Malay world has moved from a structuralist ethnological to a ‘sociological’ field of study, representing a ‘Malaysian societal pattern’ (p. 39). This social pattern has distinctive features, such as the combination of swidden farming, intensified gathering together with a sexual division of labour, and a large degree of complementarity between tribal communities and adjacent non-tribal peoples.

Apart from drawing readers’ attention to commonalities and differences within the Malay tribal world, the many case studies resist easy summarization. It is clear that tribal people everywhere face pressure from the effects of globalization. It is also clear that such pressures have long been in existence. Ethnic and cultural complexity marks the localities where tribal people live and this has generated layered webs of names, symbols, and meanings. Oral histories contribute to the forging of collective yet separate identities. Complex identities are, in turn, subjected to the prejudice of state representatives and the conviction that tribal people need to be ‘modernized’.

The minorities described in the chapters of this book all have unique features and live in particular environments, both of which are subject to change. Although many detailed insights are offered, the question remains what makes these tribal groups part of the Malay world other than being in proximity, or being complementary, to it. "


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Appetites: Food and Sex in Post-Socialist China

**By Evelyne Micollier**

**Abstract**

Appetites: Food and Sex in Post-Socialist China blurs the boundaries between many sources: popular fiction, television broadcast, movies, popular health manuals, sex survey reports, classical erotic novels, advertisements, and observations of medical practices and daily life in urban China. All can be used, the author claims, as ethnographic text (p.5). For China specialists and medical anthropologists, Farquhar’s cultural studies approach is theoretically and methodologically very interesting.

Farquhar’s ‘creative’ methodology utilizes tools from various disciplines: postmodern rhetorical and narrative tools from literary criticism and critical anthropology, alongside more conventional fieldwork ethnography making use of Chinese textual materials. Her extensive field studies in China have already resulted in, among other works, a reference book on medical knowledge in the context of Chinese culture (1995); her ethnographic experience and anthropological knowledge of medicine now appear as ‘red threads’ informing her textual analysis.

Appetites is divided into two parts. Part one includes three chapters on food: ‘Medicinal Meals’, ‘A Feast for the Mind’, which is an analysis of a zui novel The Gourmet, and ‘Excess and Deficiency’. Chapter 2, Yan’s contribution on food and history. Part two is composed of three chapters discussing sex: ‘Writing the Self: The Romance of the Personal’, ‘Sexual Science: The Representation of Behaviour’, and ‘Ars Erotica’. These chapters include discussions of Zhang’s famous novel Love Must Not Be Forgotten and Zhou’s film Erma.

According to Farquhar, the all-pervading nationalism of the reform period insured continuity from Maoist state-sponsored culture to contemporary popular culture: ‘One of the principal arguments of this book is that everyday life in reform China is still inhabited by the nation’s Maoist past’ (p.10). Economic reforms do not necessarily imply changes in the manner the state instrumentilizes science and the authority of experts. Farquhar uses the example of a research survey on sexual behaviour and sex education pedagogy (chapter 3) to highlight that, as in the past, and within the broader context a ‘civilizing project of national modernization and bourgeois normalization’ (p.215), the authority of science is used to legitimize a state project.

In a number of less convincing examples, Farquhar tends to overestimate the impact of the ‘nationalistic trend’ and ‘national character’ within narratives of Chinese modernity. What, for instance, do bedchamber arts texts such as Huainanzi (Qing period) or the classical meanings of xing (sex) found in the Huainian (second century BCE) tell us about sexuality in China today (chapter 6)? Arguing that research methods show strong biases, and that an ethnography of sexuality is almost impossible to conduct, Farquhar draws the attention of readers to the ‘official’ sex of the forementioned state ordered sociological survey, and its so-called ‘scientific’ methods embedded in naturalized and normalized representations of sexuality.

Although the author sometimes focuses too much on the discontinuities of the past and modern-day China (chapter 4), arguing that research methods show strong biases, and that an ethnography of sexuality is almost impossible to conduct, Farquhar draws the attention of readers to the ‘official’ sex of the forementioned state ordered sociological survey, and its so-called ‘scientific’ methods embedded in naturalized and normalized representations of sexuality.

*By Evelyne Micollier*

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- Liu et al., Zhongguo dangdai xing wenhua: Zhongguo liangwan lie zhi xing xianzhuang (China’s pop culture to the media’s reaction, 1994); her ethnographic experience and anthropological knowledge of medicine now appear as ‘red threads’ informing her textual analysis.
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A Selection Committee will meet at the end of April 2004. Those applicants selected can teach within the academic year, i.e. from mid-October 2004 up until May 2005.

The selection procedure involves the following steps.

1. 2nd April 2004, deadline for receiving applications to be sent to Prof. Jean-Marie Boussou and Prof. Christophe Jaffrelot (directors of the Asia programme) CERI, 56, rue Jacob, 75006 Paris. Applications must include a complete curriculum vitae and a teaching proposal. These application files should be sent par email to: boussou@ceri-sciences-po.org and jaffrelot@ceri-sciences-po.org

2. 30th April 2004. Meeting of the Selection committee whose decision will be presented for the approval of the Academic Board.

The administration of the Sciences Po Asia Chair is in the hands of the Asia Programme Centre at Sciences Po. Applicants selected by the Academic Board Programme Center should contact its director, Dr David Camroux, Asia-Europe Centre/CERI, 56, rue Jacob 75006 Paris (david.camroux@sciences-po.fr).

Chinese Media, Global Contexts

Few books discuss such a fast-changing phenomenon as China’s media landscape in such an observant and up-to-date way as Chinese Media, Global Contexts does. Continuing the line of Chin-Chuan Lee’s trilogy, it covers a wide range of topics on the development of Chinese media in the light of globalization.

By Leilinan Tsuch

Looking back now, it is almost inconceivable how many transformations the Chinese media have undergone in the past ten years. The rise of cable and satellite television, the advent of the internet, and continuing marketization of the media are just a few of the monumental changes in the media landscape: Chinese Media, Global Contexts provides us with an excellent insight into the current situation, namely how the media affect China on different levels. The book, a collection of articles, ranging from Greater China’s pop culture to the media’s reaction to landmark events such as entry to the WTO and the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. Two questions dominate the book. Firstly, how do current developments, of which globalization is the most crucial one, shape the media in China? Secondly, how do the media, as interpreters of truth, deal with these changes and relay them to the public?

China’s increasing participation in the globalization process leads to a higher level of nationalism. Playing out this nationalism has a double-edged character for the Party-State. After the demise of communism as the state ideology, state-sponsored nationalism has become the most convenient way of manipulating public opinion and to claim its rightful place. The media function as a mirror which reflects the official policies of China’s Party-State to the public. At the same time, the media are also capable of changing public opinion and to create or shape a national identity. This is best seen in the SARS crisis, where the media were able to construct an image and portray landmark events, such as the entry to the WTO and the 2008 Olympics, as glorious national achievements, while at the same time downplaying or even ignoring possible negative social side effects. In this sense, the media function as a mirror which...
Bawden, Emeritus Professor of Mongolian at the University of London, was the first to chronicle Mongolian history from the early Manchu period to modern times. Although first published in 1968, his Modern History of Mongolia is probably still the test most relied upon in Mongolian China exactly as they see fit. Chang was the first to chronicle Mongolian literature, explores the definition of articles is written by a team of well-respected authors. It is slightly unfortunate, however, that in this collection of authors, whom are either US or Hong Kong based, no European scholar has been included, which would have further strengthened the balance of this book. The second suggestion is that, while the main scope of the book is the impact of globalization on media in China, it would have been interesting to analyse the other, even less researched, side of the two-way interaction of globalization: the impact China is making on the world and its media. For example, further examining how the internet impacts on China, might it not be interesting to look into the ways in which the development of the internet in China impacts the internet worldwide? A first sign of things to come can be seen in the problems arising due to China’s developing its own standards, which clash with international ones.

Despite these minor suggestions, Chinese Media, Global Contexts further cements the outstanding reputation of the collection of books edited by Lee. Chinese Media, Global Contexts is a crucial work for anyone interested in the development of contemporary media in China.


Finally, the anthology contains examples of Indian and Buddhist influences on Mongolian literature, and nineteenth-century Mongol attempts to imitate the Chinese novels of the Qing dynasty. In these novels the Mongol language is lifted to another level of sophistication and is far-removed from the traditional epic style.

Qin Mo asked him: ‘What did you see of interest on your journey?’ Pu yu said: ‘There was one strange spectacle I observed, which was quite unusual as far as we are concerned.’ Realising that he had been serious, they asked him: ‘What was the strange spectacle? We want to hear about it.’ Pu yu said: ‘That strange spectacle was something out of the ordinary run of things. People used to say, “A gentleman on the run be ‘Scholars in the gap’”. Shi Qing did not understand what he meant and kept asking him about it. Pu yu told how they encountered the robbers at the village of Ji Lian Shan, which is more than a hundred miles away. Pu yu said: ‘In my hopeful body

\[\text{Enhances sun and moon} \]

Good behaviour, and honest mind

Enhances one’s own self.

That young, lovely creature Enhances my own heart

The tree with all its leaves

Enhances sun and moon

If one studies when young, It enhances one’s own self.

That young, happy creature Enhances my own heart

Within my hopeful body

From ‘Traditional Verse’
Art for the Masses: Revolutionary Art of the Mao Zedong Era 1950-1976

By Alison Hardie

The title of the exhibition, ‘Mao: Art for the Masses’, is partially misleading as to its content. This is really two exhibitions in one. The first being that of genuinely ‘mass’ visual culture – the propaganda posters and Mao badges which were produced in their millions, and slightly less mass-produced objects, such as a mould-cast porcelain lampstand in the form of a scene from the ballet The Red Detachment of Women. The second exhibition is that of one-off or limited-edition pieces in which the finest traditional craftsmanship has been used to portray ostensibly revolutionary subject matter. There are some true laugh-aloud moments, where one spots the portrait of model soldier LEI Feng engraved on a terr. There are some true laugh-aloud moments, when one comes from the collection of Peter and Susan Wain, and Peter Lacquer Factory in Yangzhou until it was purchased in 1997. Lin Biao, but by the time those 6,000 man-hours were up, Lin Mao, dated 1958 (height 65.5cm). On this vase, Mao’s image is painted in under-glaze blue, a high-risk process that often resulted in kiln failure. In decorating the vase this way the maker of Chairman Mao’s ‘new instructions’ issued between December 1965 and January 1968. The efforts made to preserve China’s heritage are explicitly illustrated here by a porcelain commemorative plaque dated 1964, finely painted with a traditional landscape scene; wherever it was in 1966 at the start of the Cultural Revolution, its custodian at the time had the brainsawing of turning it round and inscribing revolutionary slogans – Sweep away the Four Olds! – on the reverse, thus saving it from destruction. It is good to think that the creator of the Lei Feng turquiose snuffbottle, or of the glass snuffbottle interior-painted with the Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountains, may have had a similar conscious intention to do their bit to keep alive the national heritage of traditional crafts through the darkest days of officially-sponsored vandalism.

Art for the Masses: Revolutionary Art of the Mao Zedong Era 1950-1976

What are we to make of a traditionally shaped Chinese porcelain vase, of no obvious practical function, with a skilfully painted polychrome scene of a rosy-cheeked young soldier of the People’s Liberation Army threading a needle for a peasant granny? Or a finely modelled biscuit porcelain statuette of an avuncular Lenin handing over power to an upstanding young Stalin? Devotees of revolutionary kitsch should not miss a small exhibition at the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh of arts and crafts from China, dating from the early years of Liberation post-1949 to the death of Mao and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, and containing some remarkable, indeed unique, pieces.

By Alison Hardie

T

ese are some true laugh-aloud moments, when one spots the portrait of model soldier LEI Feng engraved on a beautifully shaped solid turquoise snuffbottle – what was the point of that? – or the freeze of communist hammerers and sickles replacing the usual lotuses on the lip of a porcelain vase. This vase, dated 1968, is a fascinating piece, bearing a large underglaze blue portrait head of Chairman Mao in a nimbus of rays. According to the catalogue, it is the only known image of Mao in underglaze blue; the technique is subject to a high risk of kiln failure, and a failed representation of the Chairman would have drawn down the wrath of the Party on the craftsmen responsible. Many a brown must have been mopped, and not just from the heat of the kiln, when the successfully fired vase was revealed.

Pieces such as this, or the exquisitely detailed ivory carvings of bumper harvests and happy minority peoples, which were certainly never produced for the masses – nor was the spec-
taculately colourful and detailed lacquer plaque, inlaid with mother of pearl, depicting the opening of the Yangtze River Bridge at Nanjing in 1969. This is estimated to have required 6,000 man-hours to produce; it was intended as an official gift from General Xu Shiyu to Commander-in-Chief LIN Biao, but by the time those 6,000 man-hours were up, Lin Biao had crossed his last bridge. The embarrassing gift was never claimed by the donor, and remained with the No. 1 State Lacquer Factory in Yangzhou until it was purchased in 1997 by the collector Peter Wain. The entire exhibition in fact comes from the collection of Peter and Susan Wain, and Peter Wain also wrote the catalogue essay. ‘The catalogue, in the form of a “little red book”, illustrates all the three-dimensional pieces in the exhibition, though only a couple of the propa-
ganda posters.

Overall the interpretation is disappointing, particularly so in the case of the posters, whose contents and iconography are not explained beyond a literal translation of their titles or slogans. The exhibition captions, and the catalogue itself, are vague on the purpose of most of the items, except to note that such objects were often produced as diplomatic gifts – this was probably the intended future of the Lenin and Stalin stat-
tuettes – or for sale to the overseas Chinese market. Given the almost heroic lack of functionality displayed by many of the pieces, this vagueness is understandable, but in the absence of information on what the objects were actually for, more information on where and how they were acquired by the col-
lectors would have been very interesting.

For the non-specialist audience at whom this exhibition is evidently aimed, more detailed analysis of how the revolu-
tionary subject matter relates to traditional iconography might have been helpful. One of the striking lessons of the exhibition is just how conservative ‘revolutionary’ art can be: In many cases there has been a change of surface decoration without any change in fundamental form – as with the Lei Feng snuffbottle, or the Mao portrait vase. At least the ‘Red Detachment of Women’ lampstand, whatever its aesthetic shortcomings, is not a form which could equally well have been produced in the mid-Qing dynasty.

It would also have been useful to have had more back-
ground information on how decisions were made in the offi-
cial workshops about the forms, subject matter, and design of decorative objects, though there is some attempt in the intro-
duction to put handicraft production into its social context. Did the craftsmen simply carry out instructions, or did they have an input into the design? Was their role within the work-
shops different from what it had been before 1949, or was it much the same? How did it change after the start of the Cul-
tural Revolution? One of the subtexts of the exhibition seems to be the role played by individual craftsmen in the preser-
vation of traditional techniques and skills through some of the most destructive years of the People’s Republic. The efforts made to preserve China’s heritage are explicitly illustrated here by a porcelain commemorative plaque dated 1964, finely painted with a traditional landscape scene; wherever it was in 1966 at the start of the Cultural Revolution, its custodian at the time had the brainsawing of turning it round and inscribing revolutionary slogans – Sweep away the Four Olds! – on the reverse, thus saving it from destruction. It is good to think that the creator of the Lei Feng turquiose snuffbottle, or of the glass snuffbottle interior-painted with the Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountains, may have had a similar conscious intention to do their bit to keep alive the national heritage of traditional crafts through the darkest days of officially-sponsored vandalism.

Dr Alison Hardie is a lecturer in Chinese at the University of New-
castle upon Tyne. She holds a doctorate in art history from the Uni-
iversity of Sussex and writes on traditional and contemporary Chi-
inese visual arts, particularly the history of Chinese garden design.

A.M.Hardie@newcastle.ac.uk

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www.ace.lu.se

Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies
Lund University, Sweden
Art Agenda

Yang Zhenzhong have similarly established international profiles for their photographic and video-based works; while others in the exhibition, including Wang Wei and Wang Jun, represent a younger generation of emerging artists.

Feasts, rituals, and ceremonies: Ancient Parkes is an exhibition of over 100 Vietnamese portraits, and working life behind the lines. This show features over 100 Vietnamese paintings from the collection of the Museum of Shanghai and illustrates how these works all concentrate on the less-reported aspects of the war from a Vietnamese standpoint: life at base camp, official propaganda, the new active role of women in combat, and compelling vision. North Viet Nam is one of the most powerful symbols in contemporary culture: the veil. Veil and compelling vision.

This exhibition covers bronze age art from the Xia Dynasty (twenty-first to seventeenth century BC) up to the beginning of the Shang Dynasty (2021-1600 BC), focusing on pieces used for ritual purposes. The selection of objects offers a fascinating insight into the role of bronze art in the protocol of ancestor worship, as well as an overview of the evolution of forms, styles, decorations, and metallurgical techniques over the course of this 3000-year period.

The exhibition explores the origins and evolution of the Safavid (1501-1576) style. It features the great hunting carpet by Ghyas al Din Jami in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum and also includes other carpets, ceramics, metalwork, lacquer hardstones, and examples of the arts of the book. The show was co-organized by the British Museum, and the Poldi Pezzoli Museum.

This is the first in a series of three exhibitions focusing on contemporary visual art; it includes examples of design, fashion, film, music, architecture, and new media. A team of curators selected some 60 artists for works done in the last three to four years. Curators: Azumaya Takahiro, Hara Hiko, Hatane Ka Morita, Iida Takayo, Kataoka Mami, Shimuta Nobuko, and Yasuda Shinji.

Convergences of Art, Science and Technology (CAST) T+0748-82-3411

This exhibition uses art to examine the practices and discourse of science and technology, as well as their impact on society. Installations include representations of the future, interactive stations to demonstrate the interface of science and creativity, and examples of science imaging art through intriguing images of cells and DNA. The exhibition will feature works by artists in collaboration with scientists, computer engineers, and medical professionals.

September 2004

Mori Art Museum
Roppongi Hills Mori Tower, 6-1-1, Roppongi, Minato-ku Tokyo T +03-5773 8600
www.moriartcenter.org/

Until 28 June 2004

Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1518-1736

The exhibition explores the origins and evolution of the Safavid (1501-1621) style. It features this great hunting carpet by Chasal Din Jami in the Poli Pezzoli Museum and also includes other carpets, ceramics, metalwork, lacquer hardstones, and examples of the arts of the book. The show was co-organized by the British Museum, and the Poli Pezzoli Museum.

Koga-gun Shiga, 529-1814
T +0748-82-3411
www.kyohaku.go.jp/indexe.htm

Until 9 May 2004

Selected Pottery: Treasures from Xi’an

These exhibits of funerary art are examples of recent archaeological discoveries at the tombs of Qimuhuangdi and Yan Xiang. The 100 works on display are from the tombs of Qinshihuangdi and Yang Guang. The exhibition will feature works by artists in collaboration with scientists, computer engineers, and medical professionals.

Pearl City, Fundació Venue: Sant Adrià Marina (North Pier) T +39-423 8600
info.fundacio@facaia.es www.barcelonaonline.org/quentens/exposicions/

May 9 – 26 September 2004

The Warriors of Xi’an

These exhibits of funerary art are examples of recent archaeological discoveries at the tombs of Qimuhuangdi and Yan Xiang. The 100 works on display are from the tombs of Qinshihuangdi and Yang Guang. The exhibition will feature works by artists in collaboration with scientists, computer engineers, and medical professionals.

New Zealand

Adam Art Gallery
Gate 3, Kelburn Parade Victoria University of Wellington Wellington T +64-4-566-5859
www.wnc.ac.nz/edamargo/

21 February – 9 May 2004

Concrete Horizons: Contemporary Art from China

Featuring 25 works by seven artists from Mainland China. Concrete Horizons features some of the country’s leading contemporary artists, including internationally acclaimed artists, Wang Gongxin and Song Dong – who are best known for their new media installations and performances-based, interactive works. Artists Lin Tianmiao, Yin Xiuzhen, and Yang Zhenghong have similarly established international profiles for their photographic and video-based works; while others in the exhibition, including Wang Wei and Wang Jun, represent a younger generation of emerging artists.
Art Agenda

23 April – 5 September 2004
(provisional dates)
The Silk Road: Trade, War, and Faith
This exhibition brings together over 200 of Aurel Stein's seldom seen Central Asian manuscripts, paintings, objects and textiles, along with other fascinating artefacts from museums in China, Japan, Germany, and France. The exhibition includes items as diverse as anti-war poetry, court documents to redeem land from squatters, moustaches, desert shoes, and a letter apologizing for getting drunk and behaving badly at a dinner party.

The Hermitage Rooms
at Somerst House
Strand and Waterloo Bridge
London
T +44-20-7836 8686
www.somerset-house.org.uk

25 March – 22 August 2004
Hausen on Earth Art from Islamic Land
The collections of The Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg and the Nassi D. Kavili Collection of Islamic art are each lending more than 60 works to this display. The exhibition illustrates how the fine and decorative arts of Islam were used to glory both God and human rulers. The objects cover a vast geographical area and range in date from the early medieval to the nineteenth century; they include illuminated copies of the Quran, paintings, textiles, jewels, metalwork, and ceramics.

United States

Chinese Art

Avenue of the Arts
465 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
T +1-617-445 2342
www.mfa.org

15 May 2004
The Glories of All-India: Indian Paintings Made for Muslim Patrons
This exhibition presents fifty-five paintings which range from imperial Mughal art from the MFA’s collection, including the renowned drawing of the dying Inayat Khan.

7 July 2004
Highlights from the Edward Sibert Morse Collection of Japanese Ceramics
This exhibition highlights over forty Japanese ceramic works from the Sibert Morse Collection. These pieces reflect the continuing significance of Japanese art to Western collectors.

Japan Society

Woven Blossoms: Textiles from Savu, East Nusa Tenggara

Photographs of Tibet, China & Mongolia
(provisional dates)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Until 9 May 2004
QianOne Billion People Group photography from the People’s Republic of China

23 April – 5 September 2004
Photography from the People’s Republic of China

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

30 March – 27 June 2004
The Art of Treasures of the World
Images document personal interpretations of the ongoing restructuring of China’s culture, society and its dramatic economic growth. The photographs are divided into three sections: Strangers in the Cities, Political Power, and The McDonaldisation of China.

Horniman Public Museum & Public Park Trust
Forest Hill Road
Forest Hill
London
T +44-20-8593 1873
www.horniman.ac.uk

May 2004 – February 2005
Woven Blossoms: Textiles from Savu, East Nusa Tenggara

An exhibition of textiles and photographs of weaving traditions from the island of Savu. These beautiful Savu textiles reflect the kinship patterns of the island, with motifs which relate to the two main descent groups. Legends and events from the history of the island are also referred to in the designs. The photographs set the textiles in their cultural context, offering insights into a way of life which is undergoing considerable change in the twenty-first century but which still retains its unique character.

10 March – 20 June 2004
Return of the Buddha: The Qingzhou Thangkas
Until 30 June 2004

The Newark Museum

This exhibition coincides with the return of the Buddha: The Qingzhou Thangkas, an important exhibition that will take place at the Chinese Academy of Art in Hangzhou, China. The exhibition features works by masters such as Houkuisi and Hishigata, that were admired and in some ways emulated by European artists, as well as drawings by pupils of Wellcome.

Return of the Buddha: The Qingzhou Thangkas

The collections of The State Hermitage Museum and the State Hermitage Rooms at Somerset House in London are among the world's most important and varied collections of Asian art. Exhibitions of works by Asian masters and lesser-known artists provide opportunities to view important paintings and sculptures from India, the Himalayas, and Southeast Asia.

30 March – 27 June 2004
The Art of Treasures of the World

This exhibition includes examples of painting and sculpture from India, the Himalayas, and Southeast Asia. One of the highlights is an eleventh-century Cambodian sculpture of the goddess Uma, an essential character in Hindu mythology. The exhibition will coincide with the International Asian Art Fair and the Asia Week auctions.

Japan Society

Photographs of Tibet, China & Mongolia

Phonetic China

Until 20 June 2004

Los Angeles, CA 90036
T +1-323-857 6000

Japan & Paris: Impressionism, Postimpr

This exhibition will highlight some of the most famous prints from the Floating World images, which dramatically influenced the greatest painters of the French Impressionist movement. It includes works by masters such as Hokusai and Hiroshige that were admired and in some ways emulated by European artists, as well as drawings by pupils of Wellcome.

Fuller Building, 41 East 57th Street
New York, NY 10022
T +1-212-255 7600
www.carltonrochell.com

Until 30 April 2004
Photography from the People’s Republic of China

Road to Enlightenment: Sculpture and Painting from India, the Himalayas, and Southeast Asia

The exhibition includes examples of painting and sculpture from India, the Himalayas, and Southeast Asia. One of the highlights is an eleventh-century Cambodian sculpture of the goddess Uma, an essential character in Hindu mythology. The exhibition will coincide with the International Asian Art Fair and the Asia Week auctions.

China Institute Gallery

East 55th Street
New York, NY 10022
T +1-212-264 3919
www.chinainstute.org

11 June – 30 July 2004
Peabody Essex Museum

East India Square
Salem, MA 01970 – 3785
T +1-978-745 9900
www.pem.org

11 May 2004
The Feast – Li Jin

This exhibition will coincide with the Feeding the Buddha: The Qingzhou Thangkas, an important exhibition that will take place at the Chinese Academy of Art in Hangzhou, China. The exhibition features works by masters such as Houkuisi and Hishigata, that were admired and in some ways emulated by European artists, as well as drawings by pupils of Wellcome.

Smithsonian Freer and Sackler Galleries

National Mall
Washington, DC 20560
T +1-202-357 4100
www.asia.si.edu

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Freer Gallery of Art

Until 18 July 2004
Birds and Beasts in Japanese Art

This exhibition includes 35 black-and-white photographs made from original hand-coloured lantern slides. These images were taken by Sir John Mandeville in 1914 and 1915. The exhibition will coincide with the Feeding the Buddha: The Qingzhou Thangkas, an important exhibition that will take place at the Chinese Academy of Art in Hangzhou, China. The exhibition features works by masters such as Houkuisi and Hishigata, that were admired and in some ways emulated by European artists, as well as drawings by pupils of Wellcome.

Smithsonian Freer and Sackler Galleries

Washington, DC 20560
T +1-202-357 4100
www.asia.si.edu

20 March – 18 July 2004
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Volks and Form: Selected Calligraphy and Painting from Japanese Religious Traditions

This exhibition presents 35 sculptures from the Meiji period. Several hundred sixth-century Buddhist sculptures buried between 1102 and 1107. Broken at the time of interment, but otherwise remarkably well-preserved, the limestone sculptures give insight into past traditions of brightly painted religious images. These works illustrate the stylistic transition that occurred during a 200-year period that encompasses the Northern Wei (385–534), Eastern Wei (534–550), and Northern Qi (550–577) dynasties. This is the only North American venue of a highly acclaimed European exhibition by the same name.

Williams College Museum of Art

15 Lawrence Hall Drive, Ste 2
Williamstown, MA 01267
T +1-413-597 5549
www.williams.edu

2004

Anton Seungrang and the Persian Image

Mingling: Western and Eastern influences. Anton Seungrang is one of Jeju’s most celebrated painters. This exhibition includes 35 black-and-white photographs made from original hand-coloured lantern slides. These images were taken by Sir John Mandeville in 1914 and 1915. The exhibition will coincide with the Feeding the Buddha: The Qingzhou Thangkas, an important exhibition that will take place at the Chinese Academy of Art in Hangzhou, China. The exhibition features works by masters such as Houkuisi and Hishigata, that were admired and in some ways emulated by European artists, as well as drawings by pupils of Wellcome.
Sex Workers in Asia

By Namiko Kunimoto

The written warning, the accompanying context show, and extensive textual information from the artist suggested there was a need to account for the sometimes harsh and provocative photographs. A large amount of wall space was devoted to an introductory preface written by the artist. Rather than articulate his motivation, Louise’s essay seemed to justify and defend his art. As if to excuse himself, or to emphasize that he was not seeking gratification of a sexual nature, the artist states in his preface written by the artist. Rather than a need to account for the sexual encounter. De Kooning’s Woman series reveal the potential disfigurement in the viewer’s reality, exposing the strong currents of emotion that emerge in the sexual encounter. De Kooning’s Woman paintings are similarly evocative through the deformation of figurative form, and they seem to express the surreal experience at play between sublimation and gratification. In these works, the distorted images of woman reveal more about the subjectivity of the artist than that of the female subjects. While Picasso and De Kooning use the visual form of the female body to express an emotional state, Louise, in contrast, writes that his aim was to ‘get at the truth of [the sex worker]’s reality and experience. ’Is there one singular, true experience for sex workers in Asia? How could thousands of women of different ages, classes, and cultures who live in different countries, share such a ‘true reality’, and, even imagining for a moment that they could, how is it that the photographs of one man could reveal it all to us? How does an image of a nude woman’s backside, bent over a male figure in a bathtub, even begin to raise the issues of ‘real’ identity and sexual politics that Louise claims to invoke? Photography, since its inception, has attempted to capture and define the meaning of reality. But meaning has proved too slippery for film, and we find that we cannot approach anything but our own subjective responses through the lens of the camera. Louise’s images stir us: the overwhelming skin and detail in the gallery space is erotic and discomforting. The range of expressions on the faces of the women, silent and staring, sleek and sexy, scared and pitiful, may move us, perhaps arouse us. At their best, Louise’s photographs stir uneasy feelings about sexuality and power, and at other times, they simply recreate the glare and pulse of any red-light district. Revealing and even intimate as the photographs seem, the tempting urge to believe that we know these women, that they might ‘step out of expectations and present themselves as people’ as Louise suggests, is an idealized and problematic urge. It insists on a dichotomy between prostitute and person, and assumes that the lens of the camera can provide the key to the truth. Photographs of Reese Louie: Sex Work in Asia is not about the role of the female body in an artistic ‘tradition’, nor is it about the exploitation of sex workers. In the end, it is about sex and not much else.

Note

1 Louise, Reagan, Orientalia: Sex in Asia and the Camera, New York: Powerhouse Books (2003), p.155

Information

The Photographs of Reagan Louie: Sex Work in Asia
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 4 September 2003 – 7 December 2003
www.sfmoma.org

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Asian Art Journal

The Asia-Europe Journal is produced by the Public Affairs Department of the Asia-Europe Foundation and published by Springer.
The Chester Beatty Library

Asia in Ireland

By Michael Ryan

The context into which Beatty moved his collection is an interesting one. Following a century or so of population decline and economic stagnation, Ireland had become a net exporter of people. The Irish diaspora (including some of Beatty’s ancestors) had spread large communities of people of Irish descent throughout the world, a trend which only began to be reversed in the 1980s. While many individuals living in Ireland may have had extensive experience of the wider world, at home cultural preoccupations concerned the identity of the newly independent state. The principal cultural issue revolved around the status of the indigenous Irish language (Gaeic) and as a result, in museums, Irish collections were stressed to a far greater extent than from elsewhere. For a long time, the Asia collections of Ireland’s National Museum were only intermittently on exhibition, and some of them were until recently entirely unavailable to the public. In Irish universities, the study of Asian languages (other than Sanskrit) only began in the 1980s, largely at first as a module in business degree courses, while at about the same time Japanese appeared on the curriculum of selected secondary schools (high school/gymnasium equivalents).

From the point of view of a discerning few, the reception of Asian art was disappointing. Indeed, Beatty’s first exhibition in Dublin, of ukiyo-e, was dismissed in a national newspaper as being of little interest. Fortunately some enlightened people ensured that the appropriate legal conditions were put into place for the Library’s continuance as a public institution, despite the small numbers of visitors. In 1999 the Library, in close cooperation with the relevant government departments, moved to an eighteenth-century building with a modern extension at Dublin Castle, which was more welcoming to the public and better equipped to preserve and present the collections.

A changing society

At this time, Ireland was changing; the economy began to grow rapidly and the demographic profile of the country, and of the city of Dublin especially, began to change sharply. In 1999 the city of Dublin began to change sharply. In 1999 the Library, in close cooperation with the relevant government departments, moved to an eighteenth-century building with a modern extension at Dublin Castle, which was more welcoming to the public and better equipped to preserve and present the collections.

A changing institution

In the first year of operations at its new home visitor numbers increased tremendously, and they have risen each year since. The Library assumes the role of a portal through which the local population, especially Asian communities, can access cultural experiences. The Library is seen as a valuable contributor to intercultural understanding, which takes place primarily in the traditional manner of exhibitions, publications, and lectures. However, the small Education Department has found partnering of schools especially fruitful: a three-year scheme to twin the Muslim National Primary Level School with inner-city equivalents has been a success. It has led to exhibitions curated by the children displaying their artwork in response to the collections and a series of storytelling sessions using the Silk Road as a linking theme, and the teachers and staff of the Library have seen a steady rise in confidence on the part of the children both in their work and their interactions with one another. There have been valuable children’s cultural festivals and Irish, Japanese, and Chinese volunteer presenters have reached a wide audience. Traditional schools’ visits now occupy a significant part of total visitor numbers, and secondary-school students in particular benefit from these. And there is a series of family days where parents and children attend workshops at which, for example, they learn about the tea ceremony, origami, calligraphy, Bedouin life, and so on.

The Library has been very active in promoting a widening of the curricula for schools in art history, students must now study at least one module of non-European art, religious education, history, and geography, and a broad, less Ireland- or Eurocentric view of the world is actively supported. We were especially pleased to see that the Library itself was the subject of questions in the art history examination of the final state examination. It is perhaps too early to measure accurately what effect the new Chester Beatty Library is having on contemporary Irish society, but on the whole it appears to be a beneficial one.

Has it all been plain sailing? The answer is, of course, no. Chester Beatty collected very little Judaica and the Library’s exhibits, which do not claim to be encyclopedic, reflect this. Nevertheless, we have been heavily criticized for this imbalance and even in a couple of cases been accused of extreme anti-Semitism. The charge is unfair, but we are actively seeking partnerships so that we can increase the presence of the Jewish religion in our Sacred Traditions display.
Native speakers of different ethnic groups in the region are bilingual; they all speak Russian. It is mainly elderly women who use or understand their indigenous language, sometimes rather poorly, by their own admission. From Stalin to Gorbachev, roughly speaking, languages other than Russian were, if not forbidden, at least not taught on the island of Sakhalin. Children were taken to boarding schools where Russian was the one and only language. This explains why most competent speakers of indigenous languages are of the older generation. It is, therefore, remarkable that one of their teachers, Nivkh language teacher Mrs. S.F. Bessonova, was recently awarded the title ‘Teacher of Merit of the Russian Federation’, showing that, in contemporary Russia, indigenous languages have been rehabilitated and may again be taught. Within this new environment, there is still urgent need for a project such as ‘Voices from Tundra and Taiga’, which aims to build a scientific digital phono- and video-library of ethnolinguistic materials on CD/DVD and on the internet (for example, spoken texts, songs, folkloristic narratives) to be used for research, and also to develop courseware for the safeguarding and revitalizing of the given languages. Sakhalin

The island of Sakhalin, with a length of nearly 950 kilometres and a varying width from 15 to 40 kilometres, is home to a persistently decreasing population of approximately 600,000 today, some 170,000 of whom live in the capital Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. Of the island’s total population by per cent is Russian. The indigenous population of Sakhalin as well as some of its languages are closely related to the indigenous people and languages on the Japanese side of the border. After a period of Japanese rule from 1905 till 1945, Sakhalin, together with the neighbouring Kuril Islands, is now part of the Russian Federation. As for the languages spoken on the island, Nivkh and Ula are probably the oldest and only aboriginal ones. Nivkh is an isolated language, while the other indigenous languages of the area, including Ula, belong to the Tungusic languages (explanation follows below). Ula, being in a much worse situation than Nivkh, is in dire need of linguistic research and training programmes. Until 1995, Ula was an unwritten language, and the only materials available consist of a limited language description and some booklets with fairy tales, games, and songs using the Cyrillic alphabet. At present, an Ula alphabet is under construction and other steps toward its preservation are also taken. In Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk (Sakhalin), at the Sakhalin Regional Museum, the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages: Paris, March 2003. Note that most data presented here are from various sources, some of which go back to 1989 and 1993. Numbers have been rounded off.

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<tr>
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<td>3,500</td>
<td>1,700</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ula</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Evenki</td>
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<td>10,000</td>
<td>1,200</td>
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In IIAS Newsletter 29, November 2002, Cecilia Odé reported on the IIAS project ‘Voices from Tundra and Taiga’, a development programme for research on endangered languages in Northern Asia, focusing on the languages and cultures of the people of Sakhalin (Nivkh, Ulta, Nanai, and Evenki) and the Sakha Republic (Yukagir, Evenki, and Even) in the Russian Federation. The aim of the project is to build up a scientific digital phono- and video-library of ethnolinguistic materials on CD/DVD and on the internet (e.g. spoken texts, songs, folkloristic narratives) that can be used for research, and to develop courseware for the safeguarding and revitalizing of the given languages. In the future Odé will join native linguists on field trips in order to record and analyse material by means of computer programmes for speech processing running on laptops.

The project was initiated in 2000 by Tjeerd de Graaf (Groningen University) and is related to similar projects that focus on the Northern Arctic. ‘Voices from Tundra and Taiga’ is partly financed by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and by Sakhalin Energy Investment Company Ltd. The seminar on Sakhalin TV, young viewers were invited to express their opinion on the need to safeguard the culture of northern peoples: for scientific purposes (53 votes), for the peoples themselves (12 votes), and for mankind (123 votes). An encouragement to continue the fight to safeguard the area’s indigenous languages.

Sakha Republic

It takes five hours to travel from Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk to Yakutsk, flying north from autumn to winter over a landscape with white rivers like decorative ribbons gently draped on snowy plains and mountains. In the Sakha Republic, with a surface of, roughly speaking, 3 million square kilometres, and a population of over one million, of which one third are Yakuts, large numbers of ethnic groups speak their mother tongue. Languages focused on in this project are the nearly extinct Yukagir (an isolated language), Evenki, and Even (Tungusic), which have fascinating prosodic phenomena. For example, in Yukagir there is a gradual change from speaking to singing in the art of storytelling, where the intermediate phase between speaking and singing is particularly striking.

In Yakutsk (Sakha Republic), at the Arctic Institute and the Institute of Northern Minorities Problems, Odé held workshops for students and researchers. After this workshop some students showed interest in the project and even seriously considered continuing to study local languages after their Master’s degree. In fact, this is exactly what we are aiming at: local linguists describing a local language, enhancing its vitality and passing it on to future generations.

Dr Cecilia Odé is a research fellow at the IIAS, Leiden University, and at the Institute of Phonetic Sciences, University of Amsterdam. Her specialization includes Russian, Indonesian, and Papuan phonetics and ethnolinguistics. c.ode@let.leidenuniv.nl; c.ode@uva.nl; www.iias.nl/iias/research/ode/index.html

Information

Projects related to ‘Voices from Tundra and Taiga’
www.let.rug.nl/~degraaf
www.let.rug.nl/~markus
www.elpr.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp
www.nwo.nl; www.mpi.nl/DOBES
www.fa.knaw.nl

UNESCO Redbook on endangered languages in Northeast Asia
www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/nasia_report.html

The Sakhalin Regional Museum
www.museum.sakh.com

The Institute of Northern Minority Problems in Yakutsk
www.sakha.ru/sakha/ync/ync_eng/narod.htm

The Sakhalin Energy Investment Company
www.sakhalinenergy.com/

Online Print Maps

CHINA NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Sakhalin Regional Museum, formerly the Karafuto-Cho Museum, was built in 1937 in the Japanese period.
**IIAS Fellows**

- **Research fellows**
  - a. Individual
  - b. Attached to a thematic research programme

- **Professorial fellows**
  - Stationed at the branch office Amsterdam
  - Stationed at the Branch Office Leiden

- **Senior visiting fellows**
  - Stationed at the Branch Office Amsterdam

- **Visiting exchange fellows**
  - Affiliated fellow, sponsored by KNAW
  - Affiliated fellow within the project 'Islam in Indonesia'

- **Affiliated fellows**
  - Affiliated fellow within the ASSR/IIAS/WOTRO programme
  - Affiliated fellow, holder of the Prof. Sheldon Pollock Professorial fellowship

- **Emerging democracies**
  - Towards regional economic cooperation in the Central Asian region

- **PhD students**
  - Stationed within the KNAW programme

- **Senior转基因 fellows**
  - Stationed at the Branch Office Amsterdam

- **Prof. Dr. Miriyam Aouragh, MA**
  - Stationed in Amsterdam and at the Branch Office Amsterdam

- **Dr. Vishnu Khare, MA**
  - Stationed in Leiden and at the Branch Office Amsterdam

- **Dr. D. S. O. Weerakkody**
  - Stationed in Leiden

- **Dr. Markus Derksen**
  - Stationed in Leiden

- **Dr. Henrik Linde**
  - Stationed in Leiden

- **Dr. Mohammad Ullah Ansari**
  - Stationed at the Branch Office Amsterdam

- **Dr. Pierre van der Meer**
  - Stationed at the Branch Office Amsterdam

- **Dr. Dr. D. S. O. Weerakkody**
  - Stationed in Leiden

- **Dr. Margaret Sleeboom**
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- **Dr. Johan Meuleman**
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Programmes

**Socio-Genetic Marginalization in Asia**
The development and application of the new biotechnological and genetic technologies in Asian religious and secular cultures has substantial socio-political implications. This NWO/ASPR/IIAS research programme aims to gain insight into the ways in which the use of and monopoly over genetic information shapes and influences population policies, environmental ethics, and biomedical and agricultural practices in various cultures and across national boundaries.

Coordinator: Dr Margaret Slobboom
www.iias.nl/iias/research/genomics

**Never Initiatives**

**The Development of Space Technology in Asia**
The space age has had dramatic effects on all nations and especially in Asia where India, China and Japan have achieved considerable success in building up indigenous space technology and applications, and have become what is known as space-faring nations. Meanwhile, other Asian nations have readily adopted applications. Well-known applications include satellite telecommunications, weather satellite services, and more recently by environmental and earth resources satellites. New and innovative satellite applications are being created each year with potential revolutionary effects. The IIAAS is launching a new research initiative and has initiated a series of international workshops on this topic.

www.iias.nl/iias/research/space

**Piracy and Robbery in the Asian Seas**
Acts of piracy loom particularly large in Asian waters, with the bulk of all officially reported incidents of maritime piracy occurring in Southeast Asia during the 1990s. Southeast Asian waters are particularly risky, a factor that is of serious concern for international shipping, as the sea-lanes between East Asia, the Middle East, and Europe pass through Southeast Asia. The IIAAS and the Centre for Maritime Research (MARE) are currently identifying issues and concerns, and are delineating core elements of an interdisciplinary research programme on piracy and robbery at sea in Asia.

www.iias.nl/iias/research/piracy

**Care of the Aged: Gender, Institutional Provisions, and Social Security in India, the Netherlands, and Sri Lanka**
This (DPAD)I/IAAS research project, aims to research the implications of the process of population ageing for the social security and health care of aged people. As the experience of ageing is highly gendered and could vary according to class, caste, and religion, this project seeks to capture the dimensions, characteristics, and trends related to ageing among different social groups and economic categories and with an emphasis on the feminization aspect. This comparative study of India, Sri Lanka, and the Netherlands draws on multiple experiences of development to contextualize ageing.

www.iias.nl/iias/research/aged

**Forms and Transformations of Religious Authority Among the Languages, Both Sinitic and Non-Sinitic, Spoken in the Area South of the Yangzi River**

The syntax of the languages of Southern China this project aims to achieve a detailed description and in depth analysis of a limited number of syntactic phenomena in six languages, both Sinitic and non-Sinitic, spoken in the area south of the Yangzi river. On the theoretical side, it will compare these descriptions and analysis systematically in order to contribute to further developing the theory of language and human language capacity, through a study of non-Western languages.

Coordinator: Dr Rint Sybsma
www.iias.nl/iias/research/syntax

**Indonesianisasi and Nationalization**

During the period from the 1930s to the early 1960s, the Indonesian economy transformed from a ‘colonial’ economy, dominated by the Dutch, to a ‘national’ one, in which indigenous business assumed control. This NIOD project explores this transformation, studying the late-colonial situation as well as the Japanese occupation, the Revolution and the Sukarno period. The shifts in the command and management of the economy are closely linked to both economic structure and the political alignment. Two issues are given special attention: Indonesianisasi (increased opportunities for indigenous Indonesians in the economy) and nationalization, in particular the expropriation of Dutch corporate assets in Indonesia in 1957/58.

Coordinator: Prof. J. Thomas Lindblad
www.iias.nl/iias/research/dissemination

**ABIA South and Southeast Asian Art and Archaeology Index**
The ABIA index online database covers publications on prehistory, archaeology, and art history, material culture, epigraphy, paleography, numismatics, and sigillography of South and Southeast Asia. The project receives financial support from the Gonda Foundation and is coordinated by PGIAR, Colombo, with further support from the Central Cultural Fund. The Leiden office is based at the IIAAS and has also been opened at the IGNCA, New Delhi, and the Research Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences, Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta.

Coordinator: Dr Ellen Raven
www.abia.net

**Changing Labour Relations in Asia (CLARA)**
Labour relations in different parts of Asia are undergoing diverse historical processes and experiences in terms of their national economies, their links with international markets, and the nature of state intervention. This programme aims to build a comparative and historical understanding of these changes, focusing on five strongly overlapping themes namely, the labour process, labour mobility, labour consciousness, gendered labour, and labour laws and labour movements.

Coordinator: Dr Raina Saptari
www.iias.nl/iias/research/clara

**New Initiatives**

Transnational Society, Media, and Citizenship

This integrated multidisciplinary network programme studies the complex nature of contemporary cultural identities and the role which globalization of information and communication technologies (ICTs) plays in the (re)construction of these identities. Although the programme is based in the Netherlands, the projects are conducted at numerous fieldwork sites.

Coordinator: Prof. Peter van der Veer
www.iias.nl/iias/research/transnational

**Recruitment for Islam in Indonesia**

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS, Leiden/Amsterdam, the Netherlands) is inviting applicants to submit PhD and postdoctoral research proposals for participation in the Socio-genetic Marginalization in Asia Programme (SMAP).

The IIAS is presently in the process of forming a research team for this programme, which concerns research regarding the introduction of new genetic technologies in Asia. Target positions include two PhD (with a maximum term of four years) and two postdoctoral positions (with a maximum term of three years). The selection of candidates will take place on the basis of a research proposal (not to exceed 2,000 words) and a resume. Fellowships will be awarded from August 2004 onwards. Salaries conform to the standards set by the Dutch National Science Foundation (NWO) in agreement with the Organisation for Dutch Universities.

**Requirements PhD position:**
- having (nearly) completed a master’s degree
- have command of an Asian language
- be familiar with the scientific discussions relevant to the proposed research

**Requirements postdoctoral position:**
- to have (nearly) completed their PhD
- have command of an Asian language
- fieldwork experience in the relevant region
- ability to work with research problems covering both natural and social sciences
- be familiar with the scientific discussions relevant to the proposed research.

Send your application (in English), consisting of a curriculum vitae and 2,000 word research proposal, before 15 April 2004 to

Mrs J. Stremlhaar
International Institute for Asian Studies
P.O. Box 9515 • 2300 RA Leiden • the Netherlands

The IIAS will continue recruitment until all suitable candidates have been found.

Queries: Mrs J. Stremlhaar
T 31-71-527 2227
iias@let.leidenuniv.nl
www.iias.nl

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**Vacancy: Documentalist for Islam in Indonesia**

The ‘Islam in Indonesia: The Dissemination of Religious Authority in the Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries’ programme studies four important themes relevant to the dissemination of religious authority: _dalwat_ (religious scholars) and _fatwas_, _tarekat_ (mystical orders); _propagation of the faith_; and _nationalization_, in particular the expropriation of Dutch corporate assets in Indonesia in 1957/58.

**Requirements:**
- ability to work with research problems covering both natural and social sciences
- fieldwork experience in the relevant region
- be familiar with the scientific discussions relevant to the proposed research

Send your application (in English), consisting of a curriculum vitae and a letter of recommendation by regular mail or fax before 15 April 2004, to

Mrs J. Stremlhaar
International Institute for Asian Studies
P.O. Box 9515 • 2300 RA Leiden • the Netherlands
F 31-71-527 4162

Inquiries: j.stremlhaar@let.leidenuniv.nl
SOAS: A Brief History and Profile

By Colin Bundy

Originally founded as the School of Oriental Studies in the University of London, SOAS was intended to train officials for overseas service in the British Empire and to encourage the scholarly study of Asian languages and cultures. The School admitted its first students in 1917 and by 1927 was offering degree courses in a score of ancient and contemporary Asian languages as well as in history (of India and the Near and Middle East). In 1958 a department of Africa was created (alongside the other regional departments) and the School’s title was expanded to the School of Oriental and African Studies. However, the academic standing and development of the School was decisively shaped by external events, especially by the war of 1939-45.

By 1941, Britain was at war with Japan. Military and Intelligence departments placed a premium on the acquisition of Japanese language skills, and SOAS provided this service. As the demands of war increased, there was a heightened awareness of the national need for deeper knowledge of the wider world. In 1944, the government appointed the Scarborough Commission to examine the facilities offered by universities [...] for the study of Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African languages. The Scarborough Report (April 1946) identified the growing importance in international affairs of Asia, Africa, and the Slavonic world, and led to substantial funding for the study of these regions. Subsequently, SOAS embarked upon two decades of academic expansion. Under the dynamic leadership of Sir Cyril Phillips (Director from 1957 to 1976) it added new academic disciplines: economic and political studies, anthropology, law, and geography. Phillips also created five regional centres to promote and extend interdisciplinary studies and research. The School’s new standing was marked by substantial grants from foundations including Ford, Leverhulme, Nuffield, Gulbenkian, Rockefeller, and Wenner Gren. The SOAS Bulletin was firmly established as a leading journal in Orientalist scholarship and new journals – the Journal of African History, Journal of African Law, Journal of Development Studies, and (jointly with other universities) Modern Asian Studies – marked its impressive and varied areas of expertise.

In the 1980s, SOAS was painfully affected by the funding squeeze imposed by the Thatcher Government on British universities, and shed some 60 academic posts. Recovery came in the shape of growing student numbers in the 1990s. In 1990 there were some 500 undergraduate and just over 400 postgraduate (Masters and PhD) students; in 2000-01 the total number of students at SOAS rose above 3,500 for the first time. New academic departments created in the 1990s included Art and Archaeology, Development Studies, Music, and the Study of Religions. The other major development of the decade was that the federal University of London entered into a very different relationship with its constituent colleges. The colleges, including SOAS, no longer received their funds via the central university, but directly from national funding bodies. SOAS became a self-governing institution, responsible for its own finances and institutional planning.

Today, SOAS has some 3,800 students, almost half of whom are postgraduates. The student body is also strikingly international: some 16 per cent of the undergraduates and 50 per cent of postgraduates are drawn from outside the UK and the European Union. A recent development has been the introduction of strongly recruiting Masters programmes that are thematic or comparative – such as Violence, Conflict and Development or Migration and Diaspora Studies.

SOAS remains a research-intensive institution, and last year attracted over EUR 10 million in competitive research funding. Specialist and deeply informed knowledge about the world beyond the rich ‘north’ has arguably never been more important than it is now, in a world shaped so profoundly by global economic and political forces, but still dangerously divided by cultural, religious, and ideological differences.

Profesor Colin Bundy is the Director and Principal of SOAS. He can be contacted via his personal assistant, Lisa Cockson.

European Associations for Asian Studies

Association for Korean Studies in Europe, AKSE
Prof. Werner Sasse (president)
www.akse.uni-kiel.de

European Association of Chinese Studies, EACS
Dr Alain Peyraube (president)
www.eacs.ac.uk/eacs

European Association for Japanese Studies, EAJS
Dr Brian Powell (president)
www.eajs.org

European Society for Central Asia Studies, ECSAS
Dr Gabriela Rauwy-Palezek (president)
www.let.uu.nl/~ecsas/home.htm

European Association for South-east Asian Studies, EUROSEAS
Prof. Anouck Bouw (president)
http://iias.leidenuniv.nl/institu-"tuten/kth/euroseas

European Association for South Asian Studies, EASAS
Prof. Dieter Rothemund (president)
www.easas.org
Social Science and AIDS in Southeast Asia

The Challenge of Antiretroviral Treatments

By Sophie Le Coeur & Maurice Eisenbruch

When studying the dynamics of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, it is crucial to take into account the cultural, social, economic, and political contexts of affected countries. These contexts affect perceptions and representations of HIV/AIDS, the process of negotiating stigma in local societies, and the effectiveness of NGO interventions and government policies. For example, the pattern of HIV transmission from commercial sex workers to young males, who then transmit the virus to their regular partners and in due course to their children, is common to Thailand and Cambodia. The mechanisms, behaviours, and cultural beliefs underlying this pattern of transmission may be different among the countries, however, and need to be better understood if prevention campaigns are to be maximally effective.

Anthropological, sociological, psychological, demographic, and economic studies on HIV in Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, China, Cambodia, and South India were presented and debated at the international workshop ‘Social Science and AIDS in Southeast Asia: Inventory of Research Projects, Priorities and Prospects for the Future’. At the centre of deliberations were the complexity of interacting processes placing individuals at risk, and the significance of cultural, spatial, and economic contexts to the spread, prevention, and treatment of HIV/AIDS. Three research projects, carried out by People Living with HIV/AIDS in Vietnam and Thailand, were presented during the workshop, addressing issues of culturally competent counselling, informed consent, patient’s rights, ethics, and confidentiality. The response of patients and communities to this medical and human catastrophe has irrevocably altered the fight against HIV/AIDS. Pressure has been put on public and private research funding agencies, and on the pharmaceutical industry to speed up the development of drugs, decrease their costs and increase their availability. Given new technologies such as the internet, for the first time in the history of medicine, patients are becoming as knowledgeable about their disease as their physicians. In any case, patients can no longer be considered mere research subjects; they are actively involved in developing and implementing the research projects.

Antiretroviral treatments are now becoming available to treat patients and to prevent mother-to-child transmissions. It is of utmost importance to study how these new drugs are received at the individual level, how medical staff are adapting their practices in the light of local cultural beliefs and practices, and how society is changing its perceptions towards the disease. During the session on the representation/perception of HIV/AIDS, Mei-Ling Hsu from the National Chengchi University in Taiwan emphasized the need for redesigning public health campaigns in the light of antiretrovirals availability, and the role social science research can play in shaping public health messages.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on society was studied from various perspectives. Two studies presented the socio-economic impact of AIDS orphans on families, and adult deaths on elderly parents (R.M. Safina, J. Knodel). Another study carried out in Northern Thailand presented the potential demographic consequences of combined fertility decline, out-migration and AIDS (H. Jones). With the spread of antiretroviral treatments, the impact of AIDS at the micro and macro levels of society will need to be reconsidered, and, as the disease switches from a fatal to a chronic one, it is likely that gradually, AIDS patients will suffer less from stigmatization as shown by papers about China and Singapore (E. Micollier, O. Shir Nee). The prevention of mother-to-child transmission is a good example of a feasible, highly effective intervention to reduce the number of children infected with HIV. However, few successful programmes have so far been implemented in Asia. For programmes to be effective, traditional infant feeding patterns and cultural beliefs and practices surrounding birth need to be renegotiated (P. Hansart-Pettit, F. Pittolo, S. Talawat). In the confrontation between the one-size-fits-all biomedical knowledge advanced by Western programmes and maternity practices rooted in traditional and symbolic values, it is difficult for women to make informed choices (S. Crochet).

The challenges in confronting the HIV epidemic remain enormous and social science has a key role to play. Dr. Michel Kazatchkine, Director of the French National Centre of AIDS Research (ANRS), stated in his keynote address ‘Prevention and treatment mutually reinforce each other and should be considered as part of an integrated approach to care. With the decreasing cost of antiretrovirals, wider access to treatment may become a reality’.

M. Eisenbruch presented the cultural construction of the causes, prevention, and treatment of HIV/AIDS in Cambo- dia, including mother-to-child transmission, based on fieldwork with monks, traditional healers, and villagers. Representations of treatment and compliance, perceptions of life with and without antiretrovirals, the use of local resources and ‘key opinion leaders’, and ethical issues such as confidentiality will require better understanding of culturally competent treatment to be a reality (F. Brouder).

The workshop was a great success and opportunity for strengthening contacts among social scientists researching AIDS in Southeast Asia. It enabled researchers to share the methods and results of their projects, to identify training and capacity-building needs and research priorities. Understanding the radical changes associated with the introduction of antiretroviral treatments will now be the main challenge for social scientists researching AIDS in Southeast Asia.

Notes

1. The workshop was organized by M. Blanc, M. de Loozenen and S. Le Coeur on behalf of the Site Asia of the National Agency for AIDS Research in France.
4. These topics were discussed by: Y. Goudineau, P. Kunstadter, M. Mucke.

Information

The above workshop was co-organized by Chiang Mai University in Thailand (Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Geography), the Institut National d’Etudes Démographiques, and the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement in France. It was sponsored by the Ford Foundation/European Alliance for Asian Studies, the National Agency for AIDS Research (ANRS), the Ford Foundation, and the Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) in France.
Land as the Key to Urban Development

Housing in Indonesian Cities, 1930-1960

Land is a key asset in urban development everywhere and Indonesia is no exception. Plots of urban land have been highly contested during the New Order regime and again with the current Reformasi. Real estate developers, in collusion with politicians, the military, and civil servants, have bought land under market-conform price. At the same time squatters have been evicted from their land by arson, as burning down a ward was a quicker and surer way to clear a plot than going through a legal procedure. By no means, however, were battles about urban land restricted to the New Order; they also occurred in Dutch colonial times. A new historical research project into urban change in Indonesian cities highlights the contested nature of land.

By Freek Colombijn

T he main focus of this project, which deals with the changes in a number of selected Indonesian towns and cities during the period 1950-1960, is on housing. Shelter is a basic need, a truism which has been underscored at two UN Habitat Conferences. Adequate housing, or shelter, gives people a degree of real, physical security, but just as important is the feeling of being secure; the existential importance of housing is expressed in the saying ‘home is where the heart is’. In Indonesian, the word house (rumah) is associated with essential matters of life, such as in the expression berahas tangga (‘to be married’). In practice, feelings of security and certainty manifest themselves in ethnic and social residential segregation, gated communities, neighbourhood patrols, and so forth. The main analytical tool in studying housing is the ‘housing delivery system’ concept (Prins 1994), which deems housing not as a final state, but as a social process. Housing is not merely construction it is also the distribution of dwellings. Steps taken in a housing delivery system are: the initiation of the housing project; the provision of financing; planning and designing, authorization, construction, access mediation, rights of occupancy, and management. Different housing delivery systems usually exist side by side in one city, and any one system often combines inputs provided by actors from the public, from the commercial, and from the subsistence domain.

It is safe to say that different groups generally compete to control a city (or town) and that housing is one of the contested issues in this struggle for dominance. Behind the question of housing in the period here examined, looms a larger research question, namely which actor (or coalition of actors) dominates any one city. Among the main actors were ethnic or social groups (distinguished on the basis of the contemporary definitions), companies, and state departments. The competition between these actors focused on the control of urban space, access to utilities and facilities, and the claim to symbolic ownership of the street.

Urban land

The provision of land is one of the steps in a housing delivery system. Land is a key resource for almost every human activity. Therefore, many groups compete for control of land, in both rural and urban settings. A multitude of tactics can be used to control a plot of land, examples of which are: registering land on a title deed, squating, referring to customary (adat) rules, or employing gangs of vigilant to guard the land. These tactics can result in contradictory claims on land, which in turn may lead to conflicts. State regulations mediate between competing groups in order to prevent or diminish violent conflicts over land. Adopting a Marxist view of the state, one will expect the state to protect the interests of the dominant group. If this expectation is correct, the hypothesis should hold true that a change of regime will be followed by a change in state regulations pertaining to (urban) land ownership. Indonesia does not, it seems, bear this hypothesis out. New agrarian laws may have followed the Dutch Interregnum (early nineteenth century), and Sukarno’s dictatorship (dubbed ‘Guided Democracy’, 1959), but the most consequential political change, the decentralization (from Dutch to Japanese rule, and from Japanese rule to independence) was not followed by a new agrarian law. The question is why decentralization did not change the state agrarian regulations.

Medan

Medan may serve as an example of the complexities of urban landownership systems. Medan developed as the heart of the plantation belt in northern Sumatra. The town provided services to the plantations, such as banking, medical care, entertainment, and education. In late colonial times, people held land under either one of four titles. A controleur’s grant was land registered at the land registration office. (The controleur was the local civil servant.) People with a controleur’s grant enjoyed full ownership of their plot of land, which continued after independence. The second type was the Deli Maatschappij grant. The Deli Maatschappij was the most potent tobacco company, which controlled large tracts of land in the environs of Medan. The company also controlled land in town. Part of this land was used for housing of its employees, but it seems that others also occupied this land. It is not clear why the company did so, and if it did, whether they acknowledged his sovereign rights. No substantial payment was required to obtain a sultan’s grant. This kind of land tenure seems to have been registered less meticulously than the controleur’s grant and the Deli Maatschappij grant, so that conflicts about a sultan’s grant regularly emerged. Municipal regulations were not valid on sultan’s land, unless the sultan explicitly issued the same regulation. The loss of royal power after independence may have eroded the value of a sultan’s grant. The fourth type was land controlled by the municipal government. This land consisted of land for municipal buildings (market halls, schools, and so forth). It also consisted of village land (lampung) that had been incorporated by the city during the process of urban growth. The municipality claimed this land, but it is a matter for research whether the inhabitants knew about the state claims, and if they did, whether they acknowledged, ignored, or contested those municipal claims. It is likely that the local residents had their own ways for claiming land (actually constituting a fifth type of title).

The question of why decolonization did not change state agrarian regulations is currently being explored by employing data on land used for housing in Indonesian towns. Attention will be paid to general state laws pertaining to land, customary land rights in Padang, company land in Medan, agricultural estates in the environs of Jakarta and Surahaya, the land of aristocrats in Medan, Bandung, and Yogyakarta, and squatters. Initial research into the case of Medan has prompted the preliminary conclusion that land tenure in the city was far more complex than is suggested by the transfer from the old, colonial land to the new, agrarian law of 1960. This is a partial answer to the question of why decolonization was not immediately followed by agrarian change. The question that this, prompts, in turn, is what the complexity of land tenure meant for the smoothness of urban development.

Reference


Dr Freek Colombijn is an assistant professor at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the Free University, Amsterdam. Together with Aegon Enzelmans, he has edited, Urban ethnic encounters. The spatial consequences (at press). For his research within the NIOOD programme ‘From East Indies to Indonesia’ Colombijn focuses on the struggle for the city.

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Information

The above research project is a constituent of the NIOD (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation) programme ‘Indonesia across Orders: The reorganization of Indonesian society’. This programme tries to transcend the conventional distinction between the colonial period and independence. By shifting the focus from the conventional, political historiography to that of long-term social, economic, and cultural change, the rifts will appear far less dramatic and, apart from change, continuity also becomes apparent. The key focus of the NIOD programme is the impact of the changes of political regime on social and economic conditions of the different groups in the Indonesian archipelago. For this research Freek Colombijn is attached to the KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies in Leiden) for two days a week. The research is to result in a monograph ready for publication by August 2006, which will focus on the issue of housing.
The Pitfalls of Independent Historical Research

In the interesting article ‘Predicaments of Commissioned Research’, published in the November 2003 issue of the IAS Newsletter, professor Hans Blom expounds the practical problems surrounding commissioned research. Describing how the Netherlands Institute of Oriental History (NIOD) dealt with these problems in 1980-1991, Blom stresses the importance of the independent nature of commissioned research. I was involved as adviser on the commissioning side in both these projects and although I am in general agreement with Blom’s reasoning, I want to add some comments from the perspective of a particular stakeholder, the Indies Platform, which is based on my own experience with this type of research.

By Herman Bussemaker

The historical research that NIOD conducts is commissioned, which means that there is a contractual basis. The contract involves two parties: the organisation ‘ordering’ the research to be undertaken, and the executing organization. A public organization in almost all cases, the party ordering a historical project has, in most cases, hardly any historical expertise of its own. Obviously, this gives the executing organization a strong and unchecked position. Such a situation stands in sharp contrast to private business. An oil company that wants to build a refinery will use a contractor to do the design and the building, but the design specifications are drawn up by the oil company’s own specialists, who have the same scientific academic background as the engineers employed by the contractor. This synergy ensures easy communication, a shared vision of the expected results of the project, and the efficient progress of the design, building, and final acceptance of the refinery. In historical contractual research, this is seldom the case. The stakes are far too high for specific stakeholders in historical research to be able to bridge the unfortunate gap in knowledge between the ordering and executing parties.

At this point, it may be wise to call back to memory why NIOD had been founded in the first place. After the Second World War, there was general agreement in Dutch society that this traumatic period in the country’s history should be adequately documented. The government ordered NIOD (at that time still RIODE) to write such a history, and over a period of twenty years Dr. L. de Jong completed a magnum opus of thirteen volumes about the war. Having been granted almost complete scientific freedom by successive Dutch governments, Dr. de Jong was able to treat the subject as he wished. The NIOD researchers, who were experts in specific fields covered by the research carried out by NIOD employees, made sure that adequate feedback was given to Dr. de Jong and his staff.

This set-up seemingly worked until 1983, when one of the co-readers, C.A. Heshuis, former Royal Netherlands Indian Army (Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger, KNIL), disagreed with the draft text of Volume 11a, which was Dr. de Jong’s first part on the history of the war in the Far East against the Japanese. When the co-reader could not convince Dr. de Jong, he went public with his disagreement. This public disclosure caused a lot of commotion in the Indies community in the Netherlands, and led to a judicial process against Dr. de Jong in order to have him rewrite his text. In respect of scientific independence, the judge decided otherwise, but the whole affair raised a negative image of NIOD among some people in the Indies community.

In 1996 a Dutch Committee was funded by a Parliamentary decision and charged with the task of organizing the festivities around the commemorations of 400 years of relations between Japan and the Netherlands in the year 2000. Concerning the ‘Breed Historisch Onderzoek’ it is stated that there will be a ‘Historical Inquiry into, amongst other things, the damage and the (judicial) redress in the period of the Japanese Occupation and during the Bersiap’. It is my finding that the Ministry’s civil servants have not executed the latter agreement. The period of the Japanese Occupation and during the Bersiap (Kinderen uit de Japanse Bezetting en Bersiap). The Government agreed to pay for the exhibition in Southeast Asia, 1940-1941’ in 2001 at the University of Amsterdam. For six years he was president of the Society of Children from the Dutch occupation and Bersiap (Kinderen uit de Japansse Bezetting en Bersiap).< Dr Herman Bussemaker is currently writing a book in Dutch about the NIOD and his email address is h.bussemaker@planet.nl.

Notes

1 The Indies Platform is an association that represents the community in the Netherlands with roots in the Netherlands Indies.

2 Source: Letter, dated 12 December 2000, from Els Borst, Minister of VWS, to Dr L. de Jong.

3 Source: Letter, dated 12 December 2000, from Els Borst, Minister of VWS, to the Cabinet and Parliament. In this letter the Minister record the agreements that had been reached with the Indies Platform for one day earlier. Concerning the ‘Breed Historisch Onderzoek’ it is stated that there will be a ‘Historical Inquiry into, amongst other things, the damage and the (judicial) redress in the period of the Japanese Occupation and during the Bersiap’. It is my finding that the Ministry’s civil servants have not executed the latter agreement. Concerning the ‘Breed Historisch Onderzoek’ that NIOD is undertaking does delve into these topics during the Japanese Occupation, but not during the Bersiap.

Response from NIOD

It was with great interest that I read Dr Herman Bussemaker’s reaction to my article on ‘The Pitfalls of Independent Historical Research’. Although I interpreted his contribution as a confirmation of much of what I wrote, there are a few things that might need emphasis.

Dr. Bussemaker’s contention that NIOD’s research projects are executed unchecked is perhaps understandable but, alas, off the mark. As I tried to explain in my contribution to the IAS Newsletter, much research carried out under the aegis of NIOD is of a sensitive nature, in the sense that it touches upon the often unhappy life stories of large numbers of men and women in Dutch society and beyond. For this reason, NIOD operates with a complicated structure of advisory boards, not only to guarantee the scholarly standards of the research, but also to elicit ideas and feedback from experts and activists from non-academic backgrounds. Thus, its present research concerning the issues of back-pay, war damage, and rehabilitation is monitored by a special advisory committee, consisting of representatives of the Indies Platform and academics, who meet regularly to discuss research progress and the researchers both with advice and source materials.

One could argue, as Dr. Bussemaker does, that NIOD follows its own course, regardless of the existence of sounding boards from the communities involved. In truth, NIOD has closely paid heed to suggestions from its discussion partners, and has amended its plans according to their feedback. This approach characterised both the 1993 exhibition ‘Dutch, Japanese, Indonesians: The Memory of the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies’ in the Rijksmuseum and the current project ‘Indonesia across Orders’. As a result, the period known as the Bersiap has, from the start, received ample attention in all the component studies of the latter programme, including the research into war damage and rehabilitation. Those among our discussion partners who criticise the choices NIOD has made, underestimate the extent of their own influence on these choices.

Nevertheless, it should be stressed that in the end only one party will be held responsible for the results of the research, and that is NIOD. In fact, only if there is a decisive point where NIOD is responsible for making an independent decision will NIOD be able to avoid alienating the discussion partners. On many occasions over the last decade, and prior to that, NIOD has cooperated with many members from the Indies community in the Netherlands – who, it should be emphasized, are far from one-minded – and often, to mutual contentment. Dr. Bussemaker has been a valuable voice in our past projects and will hopefully continue to be so in the future.

Professor J.C.H. Blom, Director NIOD indie-indonesia@niod.knaw.nl
The cooperative relationship between Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) was established 31 years ago. In subsequent years, the cooperation has greatly contributed to increasing mutual understanding among peoples of the member countries of both organizations, thus consolidating peace and stability and fostering the economic development of ASEAN and the EU alike.

Relaying on the legal foundation of The Cooperative Agreement, signed on 27 July 1995, the cooperative relations between Vietnam and both the European and its individual member states have developed in all fields, including cooperation in social sciences and humanities. Upon joining ASEAN less than two weeks later, Vietnam became involved in the existing cooperation process between ASEAN, EU and Vietnam in many fields. Vietnam’s ASEAN membership also facilitated Vietnam to join the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) afterwards. All the same, it can be said that there is still, today, some lack of understanding between Vietnam and Europe.

Hence, the National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities (NCSSH) is seeking to promote Vietnamese research on the EU and its member states. In line with this, the Center for European Studies (CES), under the NCSSH umbrella, is the first and as yet only centre in Vietnam to carry out fundamental research on the EU and on Europe at large. Through its research the centre provides scientific foundations for Vietnamese policy-making towards Europe and, in particular, towards the EU, while striving to enhance the understanding about Europe and the EU among Vietnamese people.

With assistance from the European Commission, the CES is conducting a three-year programme (2002-2004) on European Studies, implemented in the two main cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. This programme aims to enhance knowledge and awareness of the EU in promoting European Studies in the country. A department for EU Studies will be set up as part of the CES, consisting of a team of Vietnamese researchers who are being trained to upgrade teaching and research on the EU. The centre will also contain a library and hold regular seminars, workshops, and training courses. Activities include sending European specialists to Vietnam to lecture or give intensive training courses, and to invite Vietnamese scholars for research stays in Europe.

Vietnam and EU member states

While the cooperation in social sciences and the humanities has just started and achieved very modest results, the cooperation between Vietnam and specific EU member states has a longer history and is now being accelerated. The National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities already signed cooperation agreements with many Asian research centres in various EU member states. Looking back on the research cooperation in social sciences and humanities between Vietnam, as well as the NCSSH, and European partners, we may draw the following conclusions. Firstly, the results of this cooperation will not only contribute to enhancing the mutual understanding between Vietnam and EU member states, but also enhance the scientific quality of many research topics, especially those related to development. Secondly, the academic cooperation in general and cooperation in social sciences and humanities research in particular between Vietnam and the EU is still not equal to the development of general relations between the two sides.

Prospects

The above results are very modest, no doubt, but they are no less a promising start for the research cooperation in the coming years. Together with other countries in East Asia, Vietnam has a long tradition in social sciences and humanities studies. Quite distinctly, social sciences and humanities in Vietnam are also expected to provide academic foundations for determining the country’s development strategies from decade to decade, especially during the renovation period. The Vietnam Government therefore attaches great importance to social sciences and humanities, and to creating the necessary conditions for their development.

On the European side, EU scholars have set up many considerable initiatives to advance cooperation in Asian Studies, such as through the founding of the European Alliance for Asian Studies, which has already attracted the participation of seven leading Asian Studies research institutes in Europe. The main question is how to best explore this potential. It is to be hoped that not only the Research General Directory of the European Council but also European social sciences and humanities scholars in general will turn their attention to this question.

For its part, the National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities will organize activities to further the cooperation between our Center and partners in Europe in the coming years. One of these will be to undertake a comprehensive research proposal on ASEM, the results of which will be published during the international conference, to be held just before ASEM 5 in Vietnam in 2004. We warmly welcome responses from European scholars to our initiative.

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Islam and Asia

Since 11 September 2001 Islam has moved from the margins of political thought to the centre of daily discourse in America. However, especially in the United States, our national dialogue unfortunately has been limited by a lack of knowledge and understanding about this religion. While experts in the media and government focus on the particulars of Islam in the Middle East, much less investigation, research or discussion has been directed toward Asian Muslims, a regional grouping that outnumbers Muslims in other parts of the world. And little or nothing is mentioned about the role of Islam in international commercial, and specifically its impact on Asian business.

The conference aims to bring together a diverse group of academic and professional experts, singly or in panel format, for presentations or discussion groups that analyse, explain or interpret Muslim Asia’s current economic, social, political, and cultural environment. Most importantly, the conference hopes to unveil ongoing research and activities examining country-specific developments in Muslim Asia, its business practices, bilateral and multilateral trade issues as well as Islam-related pan-regional topics that impact both Asia and the rest of the world.

Days 1 and 2 of the conference will be devoted to a historical profile of Muslim Asia, particularly in relation to economic concerns. Authors are encouraged to give attention to differences and similarities between Muslim practices in the Middle East and Asia. Submissions on the following topics are welcome: (a) role of trade in the development of Islamic societies; (b) practice and ethics of commerce in Islamic contexts; (c) Muslim merchant communities in non-Islamic Asian states; and (d) women and the family economy in Asia’s Muslim societies.

Days 2 and 3 will focus on the relations between Islam and Asian business; (a) banking systems; (b) management issues and human resources practices; (c) role of entrepreneurship and small businesses; (d) marketing, advertising, and public relations within an Asian Muslim context; (e) WTO, globalization, multilateral agencies and their impact on Asian Muslim countries; and (f) best practices and strategies by multinational and other non-Muslim corporations in the Islamic communities of Asia. Presentations on other relevant topics that fit the general theme of the conference will be considered.

Information

Deadline abstracts/summaries: 22 March 2004

Depending on the availability of funds, successful authors from the developing Asian countries may receive conference fee discounts.

Sponsored by University of Hawaii, East-West Center, Muslim Association of Hawaii

First International Conference on Lao Studies (ICLS)

20-22 May 2005, Belo Horizonte (Belo) USA

T he Lao PDR today has a population of roughly 5 million people and as many as 25 million people in the Lao diaspora, comprising an amazing complex of ethnolinguistic groups. In recent years there has been an increased interest in Laos and its peoples. There has been a flourishing of scholarly publications on topics pertaining to Laos in the last several decades and a growing interest cultivated by the international media. The First Laos History Symposium, held in the spring of 2002, heralded this growing interest in Laos Studies among a new generation of scholars. This conference will build on that momentum, beyond the study of history.

The First International Conference on Laos Studies (ICLS) wishes to provide an international forum for scholars to present and discuss various aspects of Laos Studies. The conference will feature papers on any topic concerning Laos Studies. Topics include all ethnolinguistic groups of Laos, the Lao Diaspora and other ethnic Lao groups in Thailand, cross-border ethnic groups in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Cambodia (e.g. Hmong, Tai Dam, Banham, Khammu, and Overseas Lao. They are provisionally divided into the following broad categories: (1) languages and linguistics; (2) folk wisdom and literature; (3) belief, ritual, and religions; (4) history; (5) politics; (6) economics and environment; (7) ethno-cultural contact and exchange; (8) architecture, arts, music, and handicrafts; (9) archaeology; (10) science and medicine; (11) information technology; (12) the media and popular culture; and others. The First ICLS will create special panels for individuals, groups or organizations that have four or more presenters.

Information

First International Conference on Lao Studies (ICLS)
cosa@lao.edu
www.seasite.niu.edu/lao/events/Conference2005/ICLS.htm
Registration form: www.seasite.niu.edu/lao/events/Conference2005/registration.htm

Economic, Political, and Cultural Transformations of the Southeast Asian Uplands (Panel)

Scholars of Southeast Asia have long made a radical distinction between lowlands and uplands in matters ecological, political-economic, and cultural. They have only recently begun to question this separation on the basis of topographic features. This panel intends to bring together and stimulate scholarship on the economic, political, and cultural processes constituting the Southeast Asian uplands. Its participants will be encouraged to investigate not only the processes differentiating lowlands from uplands, but also the processes linking them through trade, market, conservation, and development processes. Moreover, in order to debunk essentializing and generalizing notions of the uplands, participants will seek to understand patterns and processes of variation within upland regions. Participants are expected to combine their presentations with attention to the larger-scale forces bearing upon upland lives and environments. Concrete issues of interest include the dynamics of market liberalization, migration, international conservation, the exercise of state power, human rights agendas, and the representation of upland peoples in Southeast Asia.

For information about EUROSEAS, please contact:
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EUROSEAS 4

1-5 September 2009, Paris, France

The two panels described below can be seen to reflect the interdisciplinary character of the 36 panels at the fourth conference of the European Association for Southeast Asian Studies. Participation in all panels is open to EUROSEAS members and non-members alike. The deadline for receiving paper abstracts is 200 words on 15 April 2004. Those interested are referred to the conference website.

The Development of the Indochinese Peninsula: Risks & Possibilities (Panel)

In the 1990s various countries and international organizations were involved in ambitious development plans in Indochina. One of these projects is a development programme launched in 1992 by the Asian Development Bank called ‘Greater Mekong Sub-region’ (CMS). It has been very successful as well as controversial. The aim of this project is to create the integration of the new ASEAN member economies (Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam) into ASEAN. However, concerned observers, mainly NGOs, as well as citizen groups and rural communities across the peninsula, have urged the Asian Development Bank to stop this large scale infrastructure project since it presents serious threats to the environment, the resources, and the livelihoods of millions of people in Mekong region. This panel proposes a cross-disciplinary analysis of the CMS and argues that it is objectively appreciable the plan’s merits and possibilities.

WOTRO Postdoc Project

S ince 2002 WOTRO invites researchers from developing countries to apply for a postdoc project within the DC fellowship scheme. The DC fellowship scheme aims to support high-quality PhD and postdoc projects executed by talented researchers from developing countries. The fellowship offers the candidate the opportunity to continue earlier collaboration and strengthen his or her research experience.

Since WOTRO wishes to encourage postdoctoral research, we kindly invite Dutch researchers to submit a postdoc proposal for their former WOTRO funded grants.

The candidate researcher is required to have successfully finished a WOTRO PhD project and in the recent past was, or supervised, a PhD student from a developing country with a so-called DC Fellowship from WOTRO. Eligible candidates should hold a position in a local research institute in a developing country, guaranteed to be continued after the postdoc fellowship is completed. There are no restrictions with respect to the topic of the research for postdoc DC fellows.

The deadline for preliminary proposals for the competition is 15 April 2004. After evaluation and ranking by the Advisory Committee, 20 applicants (PhD and postdoc) will be invited to submit a final, more elaborated application.

Dr René van Kessel-Hagesteijn
Director WOTRO
wotro@wotro.nl
International Conference Agenda

March 2004

20-21 March 2004
Singapore
The Internet and elections in Asia and Europe,
ASEF-Asia Alliance workshop
Contact: Dr. Nicholi Jankowski (University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands) and Dr. Randolph Kuenow (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)
Information: iias@let.leidenuniv.nl

21-22 March 2004
Hong Kong, China
‘The production of food and foodways in Asia’
Contact: Ms. Lil Li Foodconference@cs.hku.hk
www.cuhk.hk/lt/ant

20 March 2004
New Delhi, India
‘The Archaeology of Towns in Medieval Japan and Beyond 1100-1600’
Symbiosis Institute
Information: c.potter@symbiosis-institute.org

23-25 March 2004
Leiden, the Netherlands
‘Net Javasiers, nog niet Javaanse en javaanse: Ontmoetingen en bruikleen in een brachbuiting’
Sponsored by IAS
Contact: Prof. Ben Arps, convener
b.arps@let.leidenuniv.nl

24-27 March 2004
Berlin, Germany
Fifth European Social Science History Conference
Information: eeshc.ing@ing.nl
www.ing.nl/jsnc

24-27 March 2004
Bangkok, Thailand
‘Traffic in Southeast Asia’
Cornell University Southeast Asia Program’s Sixth Annual Graduate Student Symposium
Information: DCD33@cornell.edu

5-6 April 2004
Maastricht, the Netherlands
‘The New Age of the Chinese Economy’
Fiftieth Annual Conference of the Chinese Economics in the United Kingdom
Information: m.l.ame@mk3.mule.nl

5-9 April 2004
Berkeley (CA) United States
‘Nakay-ui and Newspapers in Southeast Asia: Instruments of ‘Modernity’’
University of California, at Berkeley
Information: ccsas@ucsb.imberley.edu

9-11 April 2004
Fayetteville (NC) United States
‘Celebrating Tagore’
Fayetteville State University
Chair: Dr. Ramo Datta
Contact: Sheryn Sambeth
s.jambeth@yahoo.com

14-16 April 2004
Oxford, United Kingdom
‘Buddhism, Power, and Political Order in South and Southeast Asia’
Becket Institute, Oxford University
Contact: Ian Harris
ian.harris@lst.hughes.ox.ac.uk

17-18 April 2004
Cambridge (MA) United States
‘Islamic Law in Modern Indonesia’
Harvard Law School
Information: tjs@law.harvard.edu

22-24 April 2004
Copenhagen, Denmark
‘Cenger and development in Southeast Asian Economic Integrations and new challenges’
Contact: Dr. Pia Moberg
Pia.Moberg@jacobsun.dk

25-27 April 2004
Beijing, China
‘Singaporeans in China: Nationality, identity and citizenship’
Contact: Mette Thune
w.thune@worldonline.dk

24-25 May 2004
Ithaca (NY) United States
‘Vietnamese: how to deal with the politics in culture in contemporary Vietnam’
Contact: Erik Harms
eth9@cornell.edu

May 2004

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
‘Festival of literature and culture of the indigenous ethnic’
Institute of Malay Language and Literature
Contact: Datuk Hajj A. Aziz Deraman
aziz@dbp.gov.my
www.dbp.gov.my

May 2004

Göteborg, Sweden
‘The ills of marginality: New perspectives on subaltern health in South Asia’
Seventh International Philippine Studies Conference (ICOPHIL)
Contact: Prof. Otto van den Muijenberg, convenor
suanm@fmg.rug.nl

17-18 June 2004
Heidelberg, Germany
‘The Ills of marginality: New perspectives on subaltern health in South Asia’
Seventh International Philippine Studies Conference (ICOPHIL)
Contact: Prof. Otto van den Muijenberg, convenor
suanm@fmg.rug.nl

20-22 May 2004
Barcelona, Spain
‘Sogdians in China’
China National Library
Information: vaissier@ens.fr

24-27 June 2004
Ithaca (NY) United States
‘Emerging national self-assertion in East Asia’
Organized by: Profs. L. Samuel, A. John, E. van den Muijenberg, convenors
Information: iias@let.leidenuniv.nl

24-25 June 2004
London, United Kingdom
‘Network of home in South Asian literatures’
SOAS workshop
Contact: Lucy Rosenstein
lros@soas.ac.uk

1-3 July 2004
Barcelona, Spain
‘The Archaeology of Towns in Medieval Japan and Beyond 1100-1600’
Symbiosis Institute
Information: c.potter@symbiosis-institute.org

1-3 July 2004
Cambridge, United Kingdom
‘The Archaeology of Towns in Medieval Japan and Beyond 1100-1600’
Symbiosis Institute
Information: c.potter@symbiosis-institute.org
August 2004
13-14 August 2004 Sheffield, United Kingdom ‘Political Fronts, East Asian Postage Stamps as Socio-Political Artefacts’ University of Sheffield, Korea Foundation and Seoul Foundation Contact: Prof. James H. Grayson j.grayson@sheffield.ac.uk
23-27 August 2004 Moscow, Russian Federation ‘Unity in diversity’, ICANS-37 Orientalist Society of the Russian Academy of Sciences Information: Prof. Dmitriy D. Vasilyev ivsian@orc.ru
25-29 August 2004 Heidelberg, Germany Fifteenth Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists; Institute of Chinese Studies, University of Heidelberg Information: www.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/icoa/2004
26-28 August 2004 Lauden, the Netherlands ‘Scholars in Malay world studies: Looking back, standing ahead’ Sponsored by IAS Convener: Devan Bahava dan Puntaka Contact: Prof. Yapar, convener m.b.yapar@let.leidenuniv.nl
31 August - 04 September 2004 ‘HRM Development through Education and Research’ Asia Pacific Conference Department of Electrical Engineering, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia Information: myasafulam@yahoo.com
September 2004
14 September 2004 Paris, France ‘Economic, Political and Cultural Transformation of African and Asian Studies’, Fourth European Conference Contact: Dr Manon Orsieweger evro.uie@fsev.eio.vub.ac.be
21-29 September 2004 London, United Kingdom ‘Japan in Asia. Geographical and cultural development’ Sponsored by IAS Contact: Prof. W. Seifert wu.zh.unh.edu
8-10 September 2004 London, United Kingdom Eighth European Conference on Agriculture, Natural Development in China (ECARD) Contact: Terry Cannon t.cannon@greenwich.ac.uk
9-11 September 2004 Leiden, the Netherlands ‘Onwards and to the East and made in China’ Organized by the National Museum of Ethnology and the IAS Information: Dr Nandana Chutiwongs nandana@rmv.nl
14-16 October 2004 Leiden, the Netherlands ‘Early Indonesian Photography: Searching and measuring below van Kinsbergen (tentative title)’. ISSP workshop Convener: Gonda Thiem (Leiden University) Information: iias@let.leidenuniv.nl
14-17 October 2004 Singapore ‘Blogging in (N), United States Fifth Annual Conference Central Eurasian Studies Society Indiana University and Georgetown University Information: www.ihu.edu/~cess2004
15-16 October 2004 Boston (MA) United States ‘Contemporary Chinese Arts and Culture’ Sponsored by the IAS and the farbank Centre Contact: Prof. Michel Hocke michel@ias.harvard.edu
20-24 October 2004 Goldna, Brazil ‘Hybrid Cultures in the Atlantic: Relations Between Africa, Asia, Brazil, and the Caribbean’ Third international Caribbean conference Information: ocabrea@chf.ufg.br www.net/anzouc/show.php?tid=115142
22-24 October 2004 DeKalb (IL) United States ‘Burma Studies Conference’ Contact: Alexandra Green, Center for Burma Studies agreener@niu.edu www.srce.uns.ac/DeKalb/conference.htm
29-30 October 2004 New York, United States ‘Asian Border Crossings’ Contact: Lisha Huang (for papers) or Katherine Gould-Martin york@bard.edu goudlab@bard.edu http://journals.bard.edu/nyjc/
November 2004
15-17 November 2004 Chiang Mai, Thailand Canadian Asian Studies Association (CASA) Twenty-fifth anniversary conference Information: iiias@ctith.ac.th, James Peden (Chiang Mai University, Thailand) Information: prof@preistrumekt.ch, Jacques Malterre
14-16 October 2004 Leiden, the Netherlands ‘Matriarchs on Archaeology in Southeast Asia’ Sponsored by IIAS Information: iias@let.leidenuniv.nl
22-26 November 2004 Chiang Mai, Thailand First Asia Pacific Space conference Organized back to back with the Asian Association on Remote Sensing (PAS) Twenty-fifth Annual Conference entitled the Asian Conference on Remote Sensing (ACRS) Organized by the International Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC, the Netherlands) and the IAS, in close cooperation with the ACRS organizes the Asian Remote Sensing Conference and the Geo Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA, Thailand). Information: iaas@iis.ku.do.in www.isa.as/iaas/research/space
December 2004
2-5 December 2004 San Diego, California ‘Buddhism for Peace and Harmony: Pres-ent Contest’ Mr. Vivek Agnihotri Information: nraneedoo@20@yahoo.com
6-10 December 2004 Taipei, Taiwan ‘Passage Shift in Asia, East, Southeast and South Asia in Comparative Perspec-tive’ Eighteenth IHA Conference 2004 Information: iiah@ntu.edu.tw, iiah@ntu.edu.tw
January 2005
4-6 January 2005 Dhaka, Bangladesh 9th Bangladesh Studies Conference Information: stamford@aitldbd.net www.bengal-studies-conferences.org
1-7 January 2005 Singapore Third Asia Pacific Bioinformatics Confer-ence Information: apbconf@ntu.edu.sg
February 2005
21-25 February 2005 Leiden, the Netherlands ‘Matriarchs on Archaeology in Southeast Asia’ Sponsored by IIAS Information: iias@let.leidenuniv.nl
November 2004
31 March – 5 April 2005 Chicago (IL) United States Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting Organized by Association for Asian Studies www.asianst.org
May 2005
20-22 May 2005 DeKalb (IL) USA First International Conference on Law Studies (ILCS) Northern Illinois University, DeKalb Information: c-esaa@niu.edu www.sas.niu.edu/law/events/Conference05/ILCS.htm
June 2005
14-15 June 2005 Hong Kong, China Asia-Pacific Conference 2005 Organized by the American Academy of Advertising in cooperation with Hong Kong Baptist University Contact: Bob King king@richmond.edu http://advertising.utexas.edu/AAA/AsiaPac2005.html
July 2005
July 2005
Leiden, the Netherlands ‘Matriarchs on Archaeology in Southeast Asia’ Sponsored by IIAS Information: iias@let.leidenuniv.nl
4-7 July 2005 Sheffield, United Kingdom 25th Biennial Conference of the Association for Korean Studies in Europe (AKSE) University of Sheffield Contact: Prof. James H. Grayson j.grayson@sheffield.ac.uk
October 2005

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